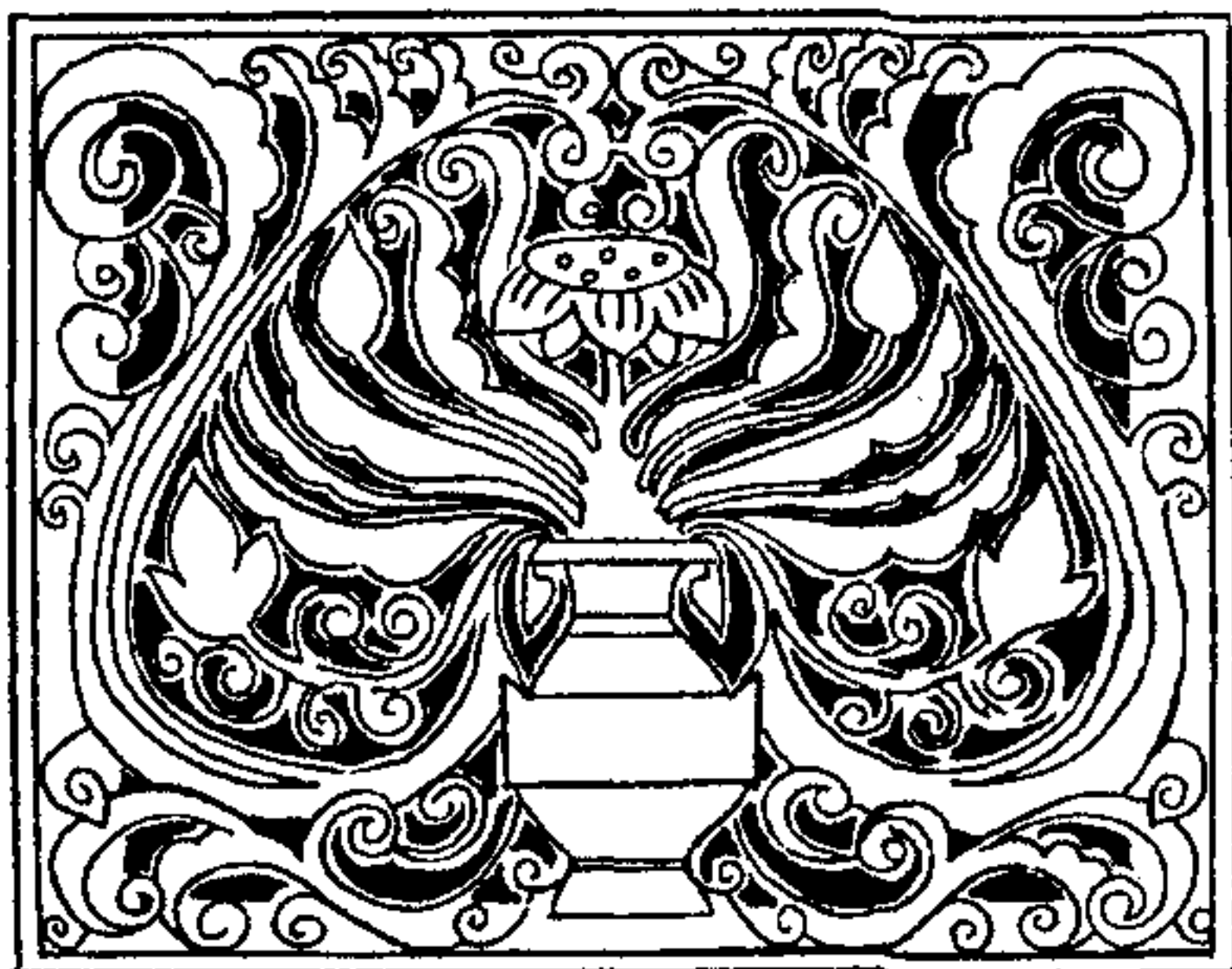




PRABUDDHA BHARATA

A Monthly Journal of the
Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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Cover: Sri Ramakrishna Temple

Belur Math

Inset: Prayer Hall

SEPTEMBER 1998

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	Annual	3 Years	20 Years	Patron (25 Years)
India	Rs. 60	Rs. 170	Rs. 600	Rs. 1500
Sri Lanka & Bangladesh	Rs. 180	Rs. 500	Rs. 2500	Rs. 5000
U.S.A. & Canada	U.S. \$ 20	\$ 60	\$ 300	\$ 600
Other Countries	U.K. £ 15	£ 45	£ 225	£ 500

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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 103

SEPTEMBER 1998

No. 9

Divine Wisdom

DHRUVA'S DISCOMFITURE AT THE HANDS OF SURUCHI

मैत्रेय उवाच
मातुः सपत्न्याः स दुरुक्तिविद्धः
श्वसन् रुषा दण्डहतो यथाहि।
हित्वा भिषन्तं पितरं सन्नवाचं
जगाम मातुः प्ररुदन् सकाशम्॥

Maitreya said: Hit by sharp words of his stepmother, the boy hissed out long breaths like an angry serpent hit by a stick. Crying aloud, he ran away to his mother, as he found his father sitting unmoved by all that he heard and saw.

तं निःश्वसन्तं स्फुरिताधरोष्ठं
सुनीतिरुत्सङ्ग उदूह्य बालम्।
निशम्य तत्पौरमुखान्नितान्तं
सा विव्यथे यद्गदितं सपत्न्या॥

The boy, who was weeping disconsolately with prolonged sobs and trembling lips, was taken on her lap by his mother Suniti, who now heard to her great sorrow from her household attendants about the Suniti's Advice to Dhruva mean and cruel-words of her co-wife.

SUNITI'S ADVICE TO DHRUVA

सोत्सृज्य धैर्यं विललाप
शोकदावाग्निना दावलतेव बाला।
वाक्यं सपत्न्याः स्मरती सरोजश्रिया
दृशा बाष्पकलामुवाह॥

Caught in the forest fire of sorrow, that young lady lost self-control like a creeper wilting before a fire. Ruminating over the words of her co-wife, she grieved and wept, shedding tears from her lotus-like eyes.

दीर्घं श्वसन्ती वृजिनस्य पारमपश्यती
बालकमाह बाला।
मामङ्गलं तात परेष्वमंस्था भुङ्क्ते
जनो यत्परदुःखदस्तत्॥

The helpless lady, finding no relief for her sorrow, sighed deeply and told her son: Bear no ill-will towards others. Whosoever causes distress to others, reaps the fruits of it afterwards in the shape of sufferings.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 4.8.14-17

Fixing the Mind on God - VIII

Last month we observed that we can associate things around us, both good and bad, with the Divine Power manifesting in and through them. The task is to 'tear the mask and see God'. But for a beginner — and for a long many years we are beginners — it will be difficult to form anything but a bad association with things that we have known to be bad; it would not be possible to tear the mask and see God. One naturally tries to avoid these. This stage in life has been pictured beautifully by Sri Ramakrishna when he says that a tender, young plant needs to be hedged in; else stray cattle will eat them. A beginner needs much protection. It will be foolish on his part to act gallantly and assume like that disciple who, taught by his master that God dwells in all beings, did not move out of the way of a mad elephant rushing towards him though advised to do so by the *mahout*, but instead started singing songs in praise of God Vishnu. The fate of one who performs such foolish acts of bravery is obvious. One should listen to the words of the *mahout*, the inner conscience in all beings and the counsel of elders, which guide one at difficult times. One must remember the caution, God dwells in all beings but on that account one cannot embrace a tiger! However, when one gets some glimpses or experiences, he is strong enough to face evil with serenity and clear inner vision. He is then able to pierce the veil and see the Truth; bad associations are not stirred up in his mind then and, instead, he feels compassion. At this stage, Sri Ramakrishna's statement that even an elephant can be tied to the huge tree which years ago was just a tender plant, applies.

Along with this, one should note that by avoiding evil or by feeling bad for lapses

in one's spiritual life, one only reinforces those very bad thoughts he is trying to avoid. There is nothing as harmful as ruminating over past mistakes; only the tendencies resulting in those mistakenly performed acts get strengthened all the more! To avoid the west, we must go eastward. We are advised to make a firm resolution that we will not repeat the mistakes we have committed through ignorance. 'Sin thee no more', as Jesus Christ said. We have to carefully examine our thoughts and remove the cobweb of bad associations already in it. In the example of the tiger, one should not embrace a tiger though God dwells in it; one should respectfully salute it from a respectable distance. This is the reason why we had mentioned in last month's editorial that even behind the bad, the energy that functions is the same Divine Energy. When Divinity is reflected in the body, mind, or intellect, then that Divinity is not as properly placed as when It shines on Its own. The tiger has not evolved sufficiently; its behaviour is animal-like and so it is a threat to humanity. Among human beings there are the sinners as there are saintly personages. Each saint had a past, and each sinner has a future. The idea is to raise ourselves higher and higher, from the lower planes of manifestation of Divine Energy.

According to this understanding, a material view of the universe is true, but it is not the ultimate truth. Scientists with a material view of the universe have been able to study and arrive at laws governing the material world. When there are exceptions, they find that new laws govern such exceptions. When the results are unpredictable, they take recourse to probability! It is better to view the universe as living. Scientists too

have taken the view that the universe is one bubbling mass of life, vibrant. They understand that while it was relatively easy to predict the trajectory of a mass of matter, it is not so easy to predict the path of a common housefly. Life adds something incalculable, they admit. Some may view the universe as composed of ideas. As in bringing into existence a chemical factory one begins with an idea and then draws up a flowsheet before the idea takes a material form, even so the universe, it may be conceived, as having begun as an idea. The universal ocean of ideas become condensed as the universe; our own ideas are a part of this universal ocean of ideas and these ideas of an individual too take shape as our scientific inventions or sublime creations. One has to recognize one's ideas as forming waves on the universal ocean of ideas. It is even better to view the universe as permeated by an intelligent principle. There is such a systematic planning in the universe that one cannot but imagine there is an intelligent principle behind creation. A commonly quoted example is that of fish surviving in the water of a lake, which is warm enough below the surface, though the top surface has frozen into ice. Some fortunate ones see the universe as the manifestation of Shakti. This Shakti is not different from Brahman. As Sri Ramakrishna repeatedly says, Shakti is the Power of Brahman; whether a snake is still or in wriggling motion, it is a snake all the same. When not engaged in the process of creation, preservation and destruction, the ultimate Truth is called Brahman; but when engaged in these processes, that very Truth is called Shakti. Even as one cannot think of a snake without its wriggling motion, or of milk without its whiteness, or of fire without its power to burn, or of a gem without its lustre, or of an ocean without the waves, even so one cannot think of Brahman without Its Shakti. In such a view, the world is not given up as a mere illusion; it is accepted as Brahman manifest, as the play of Shakti. If the

world is a mere illusion, then we too with all our spiritual efforts and our daily problems are to be considered an illusion. One cannot accept that we are real but the rest of the universe is unreal. Sri Ramakrishna says in the *Gospel*, if the Self exists then the non-Self must also exist¹. If there is the One, then there is the many also. As Swamiji said, 'the Many and the One are the same Reality, perceived by the same mind at different times and in different attitudes.'²

Everything in this universe of multiplicity is therefore a pointer to the one God. One can therefore meditate on *any* object in this universe *as* God. Sri Ramakrishna's life is replete with many examples in which various objects drew his mind to the Higher Reality spontaneously. Let us cite a few of these examples:

Even as a child, when he was once going along a field, the flight of a number of cranes against the black background of clouds in the autumn sky threw his mind into spiritual ecstasy. Some with a devotional temperament like to think that what he saw was the image of Kali in the black cloud wearing a garland of white flowers which is what the cranes represented. Some others think that a thing of beauty is a joy forever, and so the sight was so beautiful that it filled Gadadhar with joy which really springs from the Bliss within. It is this contact with the Inner Bliss that made young Gadadhar lose his consciousness of the outer world. Others think that when the cranes fly towards the seer, they appear white against the black background, and while they fly away from the seer, they merge in the black background and are not seen; this recalls to the mind the evolution and involution of the universe from and into

1. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1994), p. 328. [Hereafter, *Gospel*.]

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, vols. 1 to 8, 1989; vol. 9, 1997), vol. 8, p. 261.

Brahman. This could have plunged the mind of the young Gadadhar in the all-pervading Brahman. There could be other explanations too.

While on his way to the temple of Visalakshi, we see again that Gadadhar loses consciousness of the external world. Songs relating to the Deity in the temple sung by him raised his pure mind to a high plane. Again, on a different occasion, when playing in a drama the role of Shiva as a substitute, Gadadhar stood motionless, tears streaming down his cheeks, absorbed in the thought of the Lord of renunciation, bringing delight to many while many others felt that Gadadhar had spoiled the play!

The association of worldly things with the Divine Immanent in them was so deeply felt by Sri Ramakrishna that, even in later life, apparently insignificant things would cause a spiritual commotion within Sri Ramakrishna:

Oh, what an ecstatic state it was! Even the slightest suggestion would awaken my spiritual consciousness. I worshipped the 'Beautiful' in a girl fourteen years old. I saw that she was the personification of the Divine Mother. At the end of the worship I bowed before her and offered a rupee at her feet....³

Another day I had gone to the Maidan in Calcutta for fresh air. A great crowd had assembled there to watch a balloon ascension. Suddenly I saw an English boy leaning against a tree. As he stood there his body was bent in three places. The vision of Krishna came before me in a flash. I went into Samadhi.⁴

Once, at Sihore, I fed the cowherd boys. I put sweetmeats into their hands. I saw that these boys were actually the cowherd boys of Vrindavan, and I partook of the sweetmeats from their hands.⁵

Even now the slightest thing awakens God-

Consciousness in me. Rakhal used to repeat the name of God half aloud. At such times I couldn't control myself. It would rouse my spiritual consciousness and overwhelm me.⁶

I went to Vrindavan with Mathur Babu. The moment I came to the Dhruva Ghat at Mathura, in a flash I saw Vasudeva crossing the Jamuna with Krishna in his arms. One evening I was taking a stroll on the beach of the river. There were small thatched huts on the beach and big plum-trees. It was the 'cow-dust' hour. The cows were returning from the pasture, raising dust with their hoofs. I saw them fording the river. Then came some cowherd boys crossing the river with their cows. No sooner did I behold this scene than I cried out, 'O Krishna, where are You?' and became unconscious.⁷

Sri Ramakrishna was planning to go to a performance of the *Chaitanyalīlā* at the Star Theatre. Some of the devotees said that public women took part in the play. They took the part of Nimāi, Nitāi, and others. At this Sri Ramakrishna said to the devotees:

I shall look upon them as the Blissful Mother Herself. What if one of them acts the part of Chaitanya? An imitation custard-apple reminds one of the real fruit. Once, while going along a road, a devotee of Krishna noticed some bāblā-trees. Instantly his mind was thrown into ecstasy. He remembered that the wood of bāblā-trees was used for the handles of the spades that the garden of the temple of Śyāmasundar was dug with. The trees instantly reminded him of Krishna.⁸

I become intoxicated at the mere thought of God. I don't have to take any wine. I feel drunk at the very sight of the charanāmrita [the water in which the image of the Deity is bathed; it is considered very sacred]. I feel as if I had drunk five bottles of liquor.⁹

Sri Ramakrishna was once given the suggestion that if it were not for his injured

3. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1994). p. 231.

4. *Gospel*, pp. 231-2.

5. *Gospel*, p. 232.

6. *Gospel*, p. 232.

7. *Gospel*, pp. 362-3.

8. *Gospel*, p. 546.

9. *Gospel*, p. 563.

arm he could have gone to visit the exhibition in the Maidan. To this Sri Ramakrishna replied:

I shan't be able to see everything even if I go. Perhaps my eyes will fall on some certain thing and I shall become unconscious. Then I shall not be able to see the rest. I was taken to the Zoological Garden. I went into samadhi at the sight of the lion, for the carrier of the Mother awakened in my mind the consciousness of the Mother Herself.... I had to return home after seeing only the lion.¹⁰

Once a devotee described the Convocation of Calcutta University, saying that the meeting looked like a forest of human heads. Sri Ramakrishna observed:

The feeling of the Divine is awakened in me when I see a great crowd of people. Had I seen that meeting, I should have been overwhelmed with spiritual fervour.¹¹

Such events happened in the life of Sri Chaitanyadeva too. Once Chaitanyadeva was passing a village. He heard that drums were made from the earth of that place. At once he was overwhelmed with ecstasy because drums are used in kirtan.¹²

A Hindu's life is full of rituals, from the cradle to the cremation ground! In the limit as these rituals are made simpler and extended to infinity in number, one continues to remain in God-consciousness. The many occasions on which one remembers, in some form or the other, God's grace are merely suggestions to the mind to persist in these thoughts. Hindus give to their children the names of gods, a constant reminder to oneself and to others. The Hindu mode of greeting one another with folded hands is a recognition of the Divine within. All salutations are directed to Kesava, it is believed.

There are a number of celebrations in Hindu society in which gods and goddesses are worshipped in images. People who do

not understand it, decry it as image worship. But these are also reminders to man to worship the omnipresent God. On the importance of maintaining a worshipful attitude by engaging in religious performances, and on every object in the universe being suitable for worship, Sri Ramakrishna advises two women devotees as follows:

Worship Śiva.... In order to perform the worship of God you will be preoccupied for a long time with such religious duties as plucking flowers, making sandal-paste, polishing the utensils of worship, and arranging offerings. As you perform these duties, your mind will naturally be directed to God. You will get rid of meanness, anger, jealousy, and so forth. When you two sisters talk to each other, always talk about spiritual matters. The thing is somehow to unite the mind with God. You must not forget Him, not even once. Your thought of Him should be like the flow of oil, without any interruption. If you worship with love even a brick or stone as God, then through His grace you can see him.¹³

You may say that you are attached to many things in this world. What is the way for such? We have an illuminating example in the life of a relative of Mani Mallick, a woman devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, which reveals that such strong attachments are not a hindrance and that with a correct view it can lead one to spiritual progress:

One day she [the devotee] came and said to him [Sri Ramakrishna] with great humility that when she sat down to meditate on God, worldly thoughts, the words of one, the face of another, etc., came into her mind and she could not attain to restfulness. The Master at once understood the mood. He knew that she loved someone whose words and face came to her mind. He asked her affectionately, 'Well, whose is the face that comes to your mind? Whom do you love?' She replied that she loved a young nephew of hers, whom she was bringing up. The Master said, 'Very well, whatever you do for him — feeding, dressing,

(Continued on page 568)

10. *Gospel*, p. 391.

11. *Gospel*, p. 200.

12. *Gospel*, p. 658.

13. *Gospel*, pp. 431-2.

Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

यदा पश्यः पश्यते रुक्मवर्णं
कर्तारमीशं पुरुषं ब्रह्मयोनिम्।
तदा विद्वान्पुण्यपापे विधूय
निरञ्जनः परमं साम्यमुपैति॥

*Yadā paśyaḥ paśyate rukma-varṇam
kartāram-īśam puruṣam brahma-yonim;
Tadā vidvān-puṇya-pāpe vidhūya
nirañjanaḥ paramam sāmiam-upaiti.*
(III.i.3)

When the Seer sees the Person — brilliant Creator, Lord, and the Source of inferior Brahma—, then the illumined one completely shakes off both good and evil (virtue and vice), becomes taintless and attains absolute equality (supreme identity).

The question arises: what will happen to me if I see the Divine Witness? The answer to this question of incentive is given in this *mantra*. The first two *mantras* of this *Muṇḍaka* explained figuratively what we are today, what our goal is and how we are to achieve it. As long as there is a desire merely to 'know', these things do not find practical application in a person. But one who has thoroughly analysed the world and its activities, seen through its vanities and is tired of it, looks out for something more educative and rewarding. Then he becomes an *adhikāri* (one competent to study the Upaniṣads), for in addition to all other information, the correct position about 'who am I?' is found in the Upaniṣads. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that a *vaidya*, a *kavirāja*, will not administer the medicine till he is fully satisfied with the diagnosis based on the symptoms of the disease which are very clearly present. Simi-

larly, the Upaniṣads expect the student to first live in the world with great insight, to introspect and analyse it to satisfy himself whether or not it is rewarding enough. This he must do till he himself realizes worldly life to be a *mṛgaṭṛṣṇā*, mirage. Only then these teachings appeal to him as being applicable in life. But even when he is prepared to follow the discipline, and study the dictums of the Upaniṣads, he still desires to know what he will get in return.

This third *mantra* is an assurance to the student of the return he gets for investing all his energies in leading this way of life. When he will see the effulgence, the colour of shining gold, *rukma-varṇam*, the joy of that experience remains with him forever. The polish of gold is not tarnished like that of copper or brass; it is long-lasting. Similarly, the wisdom acquired by this experience of the universe is ever-lasting. He experiences the Ruler of the universe (*Īśam*), the *Saguṇa* Brahman, (*Brahma-Yonim*), from where the universe emanates. He realizes that That is the *Kartā*, the Creator, the Maker of the Cosmos — the Master and supreme Cause of the universe. The Lord, *Puruṣa īśa* is the Creator within everyone. *Puri śayanāt puruṣaḥ*, That (Atman) which resides in the body, the city of nine gates. Also, *Pūrṇatvāt vā puruṣaḥ*, that is, *Puruṣa* (Brahman) is *pūrṇa*, perfect, whole, complete in Itself, pervading the cosmos. Both Atman and Brahman — the subjective and objective aspects of Reality — are mentioned in the same breath. This Self of mine is verily Brahman. And the person experiences *Brahma-yonim* — the source and creator in this *Puruṣa*. *Kevalādvaita-vāda* is not

content to get stuck to any apparent reality; it holds on only to the Absolute Reality, the one essence of the *Jīva* as the Atman or Brahman. The *Māṇḍūkya Kārikā* says that when the *Jīva* awakes from the sleep of *anādi māyā*¹ — beginningless delusion in which he thought himself to be an individual and an entity separate from everything else —, he becomes *prabuddha*, illumined, and knows his true original nature; he realizes the birthless, sleepless, dreamless, non-dual substratum of the universe.

But this is not at all an easy experience or realization for a person. The teacher took this into consideration. If one does not understand *Māyā* of Advaita, then begin with morality and a code of conduct — a list of do's and don't's. This will improve the personality to become a proper vehicle for the subtle experience of spiritual oneness. Looking at the world system, we argue that there must be a Ruler of the universe at whose command everything moves in a proper rhythm. He is that *Kartā*, *Īśvara*, *Puruṣa*. As *Nirguṇa* Brahman is beyond our comprehension, so, for the sake of spiritual uplift and advancement, that Atman or Brahman is personified as *Īśvara*, called also *Puruṣa*, *Brahmayoni*, Whose love and mercy we seek. The Absolute, out of compassion for His children, takes the human form of *Īśvara*, the stepping-stone to spiritual growth and improvement of one's personality. From fear of God we shift to love and attachment to God. The teacher has brought down the *Nirguṇa*, *Nirvikalpa*, *Nirākāra* one step to *Īśvara*, to make It understandable by the human mind in its present state. *Īśvara* is not only a philosophical idea but also a reality. However, if that *Īśvara* too, like Atman and Brahman, is not within our capacity to visualize, concepts such as *kartā* — *sraṣṭā*, *pālanakartā*, *vināśakartā* (creator, preserver and de-

stroyer) — have been introduced, and with these we feel at home.

The knower and experiencer (*vidvān*) of this *Puruṣa*, frees himself from virtue and vice associated with karma. He reaches sublime equanimity (*paramam sāmīyam*) and becomes undisturbed by anything in the world. That is, the wise one has no longer any need for the list of do's and don't's. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that you need some means to climb to the roof. However, after reaching the roof, the means employed may not be of much importance. Even so, the rules relating to performance of good deeds and abstinence from bad deeds are needed initially, but after the attainment of wisdom, they are no longer necessary as the person has transcended the very ideas of virtue and vice. This *mantra* is in the spirit of *Dvaitavāda* (Dualism): I exist; so does God, the Ruler of the universe, exist. If by my conduct I can please Him, then it will be easier for me to move step by step from *Jīva*'s beginningless sleep (*anādi-māyayā suptam*) to enlightenment, in the language of the *Māṇḍūkya Kārikā*.

The knower becomes stainless, pure, untainted and achieves equanimity (*samatā*). One begins by holding himself in balance by an effort of will, with the determination that whatever happens he will remain tranquil, peaceful and undisturbed. The end result of knowing one's self-identity is such a poise that neither the worst of the world's calamities any longer disturb the person nor does the best the world has to offer make him cast a second look. This equanimity is exemplified by King Janaka: when Mithila was in flames, he remained unmoved saying that nothing belonging to him was burning. Such a person has no chance of being overtaken by an upheaval of *asāmīyatā* (imbalance), for the person has realized Atman or Brahman within and without; he has evolved his personality to that of the Divine.

1. *Anādimāyayā supto yadā jīvaḥ prabudhyate;
Ajām-anidram-asvapnam-advaitam
budhyate tadā.* — I.16.

प्राणो ह्येष यः सर्वभूतैर्विभाति
विज्ञानन्विद्वान्भवते नातिवादी।
आत्मक्रीड आत्मरतिः क्रियावा-
नेष ब्रह्मविदां वरिष्ठः॥

*Prāṇo hy-eṣa yaḥ sarva-bhūtair-vibhāti
vijānan-vidvān-bhavate nātivādī;
Ātma-kṛīḍa ātma-ratiḥ kriyāvān-
eṣa brahma-vidām varīṣṭhaḥ. (III.i.4)*

Truly, this one is the Vital Force which shines forth variously in all beings. Understanding this, one becomes a Knower, truly wise (the illumined man), and has no occasion to go beyond anything in his talk. He disports (delights) in the Self, delights (has pleasure) in the Self, and is engrossed in the rites (spiritual efforts). Such a one is the best among the Knowers of Brahman.

This *mantra* covers the behavioural pattern of the realized soul living in the world. The *vidvān* (Knower) is a person who started his life as a bound man but who, after attaining the goal of *mukti* (liberation) by experiencing Atman and Its oneness with Brahman during *nirvikalpa samādhi*, still continues to live in the world. In this *mantra* is a description of how such a person feels after his individuality has merged with the Atman. There is a change in his personality and conduct, revealed in his code of conduct, in how he reacts to the world. After coming out of *samādhi* he looks about him and finds that the Cosmic Energy is shining, manifesting in all things: *sarva bhūtair-vibhāti*. That Reality, in the form of Life Force (*Prāṇa*) is pervading everyone — including the perceiver — and every object in the whole world.

He is no longer an *ativādī*, vain or insolent. Being vain or insolent is the style of talking of those whose focus is on the difference between things. But when the perception of difference is replaced by that of oneness of the universe, one sees all things as the same Atman or Brahman. Then, in that per-

son, there is no more any pride, impertinence, or insolence. A vain person does not allow others to express their views; he says, 'I know better than you.' Such an attitude is unknown to the *vidvān* because he has known that he has no right to tell another, 'you are wrong,' nor does he make a show of superiority in his speech. He does not engage in *vāda-vivāda* (discussion, contradiction and argument) to impose his own views on others. *Vitaṇḍā* (a frivolous or fallacious argument or controversy) and *jalpa* (wrestling discussion) are far from him; he does not shout others down to impose his will as do those with egotism. The Knower is the humblest of the humble.

Such a person can only be identified by living closely with him, watching his daily behaviour, and ascertaining what is uppermost in him: his ego, or his consciousness of the Divine everywhere. Śaṅkarācārya says that *sādhana* and *siddhi* are described throughout the scriptures; the signs and symptoms (*lakṣaṇas*) of the *kṛtārtha* (the goal-attained one, the *siddha puruṣa*) are to be emulated and cultivated by the *sādhaka*.² Pavahari Baba used to say, 'yan sādhan, tan siddhi.' A *kṛtārtha puruṣa* (the fulfilled one), like Sri Ramakrishna, says, 'I do not know, the Divine Mother knows everything'. Christ said, 'The Father in Heaven knows'. One is lifted to such a height that one, for all time to come, forgets to say 'I have done it'; instead he says, 'it is God who is doing'. Here also the realized person's behaviour is described as *na-ativādī*. Sri Ramakrishna's life exemplifies the signs of spiritual wisdom stated in the scriptures. When a young man of Dakshineswar (later Swami Yogananda), proud of his aristocratic lineage, mistook him to be a gardener and asked him to pluck a flower for him, Sri Ramakrishna readily

2. *Sarvatraiva hyadhyātmasāstre kṛtārthalakṣaṇāni yāni tānyeva sādhanānyupadiśyante yatna sādhyatvāt....* (Gita, 2.55, Acharya Shankara's commentary.)

complied because he saw the Divine even in that person and truly felt that in serving that person he was serving God Himself. This is what is meant by 'seeing the same Energy everywhere and not being an *ativādī*'. In another instance, Sri Ramakrishna had the vision of Bhavatarini Kali of the Dakshineswar temple even in women of questionable character. Thoughts of criticizing or of looking down upon another did not arise in his mind because of the transcendental experience of the oneness of the universe.

So, the *Brahmavit puruṣas* do not see any other besides themselves, as their Self is extended to include the whole world. They know Brahman manifest as *Prāṇa*, that this *Prāṇa* is only an aspect of that Infinite Being and that all living entities contain that one *Prāṇa*. There is therefore no seeing of separateness between you and me.³ On the other hand, for the ordinary person the fundamental approach to the world is: 'I' at one end, and 'you' at the other. After the attainment of *jñāna*, this awareness of separateness disappears. Though in conducting their daily life they use the words 'I' and 'you', there does not remain even an iota of separateness in their minds. Prior to illumination, in all decision-making, separateness is so strong that personal considerations are very strong. But after illumination, the attitude is: your need is greater than mine; if you have a thing, in reality I have it also; not through my body-mind mechanism, but through your body-mind mechanism. I

know you are as hungry as I am, however I am not going to assert my right to my morsel of food before you have yours. Sri Ramakrishna, while he was suffering from throat cancer, being urged by his disciples went to Bhavatarini Kali to pray to Her to let him eat a little. The Divine Mother told him, 'Are you not eating through millions of mouths in the world?' Sri Ramakrishna knew this truth, but he went through this episode to make his disciples understand that he had detached himself from his body and identified himself with the *virāt*. Outwardly he was living in this world like any other person, but inwardly he was beyond worldly level, in another level. Sri Ramakrishna talked of the mere intellectual knowledge of milk being replaced by the act of drinking it, assimilating it, and becoming strong by it. He meant that theoretical knowledge of Atman or Brahman was to be actualized in one's daily life and actions. Swami Vivekananda said that there must be practicalization of the spiritual wealth to regenerate the Motherland. The *Yoga-sūtra* (II.35) says: *Ahimsā-pratiṣṭhāyān tat-sannidhau vairatyāgaḥ*, the feeling of enmity is totally eradicated from a person of violent temperament in the presence of one established in *ahimsā*. Gautama Buddha's very presence converted the dacoit Aṅgulimāla from his murderous intentions. This episode, and the episodes from Sri Ramakrishna's life as well as the compassion and mercy of Christ are all examples of *na-ativādī*.

(A discussion of the second part of the mantra to be continued in the next issue)

3. *Yuṣmad-asmāt-pratyaya-gocarayoh viśaya-viśayīṇoh...* (*Brahma Sūtras*, Acharya Shankara's Introduction.)

Vedanta is neither scripture nor a code of laws. It is not a religion or a system of philosophy, for it is the philosophy of all philosophies, the science of all sciences. It is not made at all. It is ever-existent, embracing the sun, the moon, the stars, and all the universe.

—Swami Trigunatitananda, *Precepts for Perfection*, p. 9

Gita and Mahabharata

TAPOBROTA BHARADWAJ

Sri Tapobrota Bhardawaj, after highlighting the great appeal the Gita has the world over, discusses the age-old dispute whether Gita forms a part of the Mahabharata or it is a later interpolation. Basing on intelligent arguments, he shows that Gita is indeed a part of the Mahabharata. The author makes an interesting observation that 'corruption and injustice had taken strong hold in all the principalities of the country and humanity was crying for relief. The most fascinating feature of this phenomenon was the fact that the cycle started with benevolent and godly persons around whom power accumulated, but soon that very power for good started breeding corruption and, more the power, more the corruption.' Thus Kurukshetra war was a historical necessity which eliminated all the Kshatriyas and made the country lack in men of vigour. But it had to be fought by the Pandavas without mistaking the victory as Arjuna's personal achievement. 'That would have', says the author, 'defeated the whole purpose of the war, the remedy would have been even worse than the disease. Earth would have been burdened with another oppressive prince! It was, therefore, very important that the cosmic mystery be unfolded to Arjuna and that he wholly cooperate with Sri Krishna in giving lead to a new world order.'

Preamble

It is a usual practice to meditate on the *Gita* before reciting it, because the verses used for meditation set the course of the thought process. This paper is an attempt to create an image of the *Gita* in the historical perspective of the epic *Mahabharata* for the purpose of meditation. The paper shows that Sri Krishna initiated Arjuna by his divine yogic power into the mystery of the phenomenal world with its violently dynamic aspect (war and destruction) on the one hand and the calm, serene aspect (*nirvana* and equanimity) on the other hand, and taught him the harmonized technique of reaching *nirvana* while in the midst of intense activity. The paper removes the common misconception that Arjuna was paralysed by fear in the war front and Sri Krishna inspired him to fight. We give extensive reference from the *Mahabharata* to show that (a) Yudhishthira and the other Pandava brothers were aware about their historic role in fighting a war where all the Kshatriya

warriors of India would be killed, (b) they initially opted for suffering in exile to ward off the war, (c) they agreed to fight the war merely as a moral duty with the full knowledge of its consequence, and (d) Sri Krishna induced intense anguish in Arjuna to purge him of his ego so that he could receive the teachings of Sri Krishna.

There are many excellent commentaries on the *Gita* today and this paper does not intend, therefore, to go into the subject matter of the *Gita*. It focusses on the fact that the *Gita* depicts a transcendent experience and that one can grasp its spirit fully only by living through a similar experience. A student of the *Gita* must therefore undertake his studies with the humility that the *Gita* vision is beyond intellectual exercise.

Introduction: Gita Appeals to All

Bhagavan Sri Krishna advised Arjuna on the approach he should have towards life before the start of the great war of the Maha-

bharata at Kurukshetra and his teachings are so appropriate and universal that they apply to all of us even today. This part of the Mahabharata is treated with utmost reverence and is called Srimad Bhagavad-Gita or Gita in short. An authority like Acharya Shankara interpreted the Gita and commented on its teachings. He very extensively referred to the Gita in his commentary on the *Brahma Sutras*. The teachers of other sects also wrote on the Gita and preached its message through the ages. There are many scholars in India and abroad who are not committed to any sectarian outlook on religion and yet have written on the Gita. Most of the literature on the Gita try to interpret it in the light of the author's perception of social values, ethics, and spiritual and religious experiences. There are, astonishingly, scholars who are critical of the teachings of the Gita. Thus, the Gita draws interest from people in all walks of life and there are innumerable translations of and commentaries on the Gita. A few special features of the Gita which make it appealing and interesting to a large number of people are discussed below:

1. The Gita was *addressed to a man of the world*, a householder with family and social responsibilities. It shows that even a common man can continue to do his household duties but with a different spirit and thereby achieve the state of equanimity which is achieved by the wise, all-renouncing mendicants. Thus, the Gita is relevant to all those who are embroiled in the affairs of the world and want to lead a spiritual life.

2. The Gita is *pluralistic in approach* and accepts all faiths as equally valid and divine. It is surprising that even in that antiquity when religions could be expected to speak only about the tribal god and fight to establish the greatness of the god of their own tribe, we find it taught in the Gita that people worship the same God with different names

in different forms and with different objectives, and that all worship reach the same God.

3. The events and experiences of one's life are explained in the Gita in a *rational, scientific manner*. All physical, social and personal behaviour are said to be the working of Nature. One should not hunt for a supernatural explanation for any event.

4. The Gita is not a part of the Vedas, although its *teachings are Vedantic*. It is, therefore, *open to all without any barrier of caste and sex*. The Gita is read extensively by Hindus as a pious act and everybody is free to accept as much of the Gita as required to suit his peculiar inclinations and situations. This is the reason why there are so many interpretations of and emphasis on the Gita, some following the orthodox traditions and others giving unorthodox, new concepts, all done without hurting the religious sentiments of people.

5. As a part of the Mahabharata, the Gita *reflects the prevailing concepts and values on ethics, religion and philosophy*. Some of the ideas which were only in a latent form in other texts are, however, defined more clearly in the Gita, and these include: the Yoga of Action, to work without the desire for rewards; Divine incarnation or Avatara; Devotion and complete surrender to God. In the Vedas, religion was ritualistic, requiring a number of qualified priests to perform them. At the personal level, honest living, austerity, charity—offering gifts to the needy, and doing the obligatory duties enjoined on the member of a particular caste were the essential part of life. The three higher castes could renounce their worldly duties and adopt the life of a mendicant after fulfilling their family obligations. Devotion, love and complete surrender to a personal God are concepts which appear fully developed in the Gita.

6. We find in the Gita *the right answers* to all our problems and situations and *clear directions* as to the course we should take. That is why sannyasins, followers of the path of devotion, social workers and common householders all find the Gita relevant to their spiritual needs.

Some Controversies on the Gita

There are many controversies on the Gita: the correct reading of the verses, the number of the verses, the age of the Gita as a literature, the historical basis of the Mahabharata and its characters and the interpretation of the Gita verses in the context of the various philosophical schools in India. Even assuming that the Mahabharata as an epic is based on actual historical events and that there *was* a great war at Kurukshetra which marked the end of a period in the ancient history of the country, there still exists a controversy whether the dialogue depicted in the Gita actually took place or the author or some other compiler just interposed a philosophical thesis synthesizing the prevailing traditions in the country. The argument in favour of the compilation theory may be summarized as follows:

1. The Gita is not a logical requirement for the main theme of the epic and may be completely deleted without any apparent break or discontinuity in the course of the Mahabharata. It is surprising that the event of Sri Krishna advising Arjuna with his arms put aside in utter despair in the middle of the battlefield did not evoke any interest from the army on either side who must have been watching them with the keenest interest. The Gita is not mentioned in the main story related with the war.

2. During the eighth day of the war, Iravan, a son of Arjuna was killed and Arjuna expressed his grief to Sri Krishna as follows:

O Madhusudana, wise Vidura was aware of this great calamity for the Kauravas and the Pandavas and warned us as well as Dhritarashtra about it. See how the Kauravas have killed many of our heroes and we have killed many Kauravas. It is for wealth that people do many cruel deeds, and we are engaged in this heinous work of killing our close relations. Shame on wealth! It is better for a person without wealth to die than to earn the wealth by killing his relatives. Krishna, what are we going to earn by killing this assembly of our close relations? The Kshatriyas are getting killed because of the misdeeds of Duryodhana and Shakuni and the bad counsel of Karna. Now I appreciate how wise it was for Yudhishthira to plead for half the kingdom or just five villages for a settlement, but the bad Duryodhana did not agree to this proposal of Yudhishthira at that time. Now, I am blaming myself on seeing the warriors lying dead on the field. Shame on the profession of the Kshatriyas! I do not desire to fight against our kinsmen, but if I cease fighting the warriors will consider me incapable, and it is only for this reason that I am engaged in this work. Therefore, Krishna, you guide the horses to the army of Dhritarashtra and I will swim across the ocean of the war with my power. There is no purpose wasting time like an impotent person.

The dialogue sounds familiar to us, but Arjuna did not mention the Gita although he mentioned Vidura and Yudhishthira. Either the Gita did not leave an impression on his mind or, more probably, the Gita was an interpolation.

3. The Gita depicts Arjuna in a state of neurotic passivity—very different from the image one gets about him from the Mahabharata. Arjuna was kind and considerate but he would never faint in the battlefield even in the most difficult circumstances. In

the Virata court, when news reached that Uttara had defeated the Kuru army, Yudhisthira said, 'My lord, if Indra leading the gods comes to the warfield surrounded by the Kuru princes like Duryodhana, Karna, Kripa, Aswatthama, Bhishma and Acharya Drona, there is only one person who can fight them, and that is Brihannala.¹ There is none today and none will ever be born as powerful as her, and she gets an intense pleasure when in the midst of fierce battle.' We would like to believe Yudhisthira and are, therefore, left with a doubt about the Gita story.

4. Arjuna had at one point posed a pointed question: If the war killed the entire male population of the warrior caste in India, leaving behind old parents and young wives, would it be worth winning it at this price? Sri Krishna answered it during the peace mission to Hastinapur court when Duryodhana said that he had not committed any offence and that Yudhisthira would be entirely responsible for the death and the suffering of the armies of the two factions. Sri Krishna said at that time that Duryodhana with his friends had indeed committed many offences.

- (a) They had usurped the property of the Pandavas which was entrusted to the Hastinapur court.
- (b) They had violated the honour of Draupadi for which they had not been punished.
- (c) They had carried out conspiracies to kill their cousin princes when they were minors living under the guardianship of Dhritarashtra by poisoning their food and by setting fire to their house when they would be sleeping.

Yudhisthira was the sovereign emperor of the land of Bharata and he would be failing in his duties if he let these crimes go unpunished. Yudhisthira was duty bound to ad-

minister law and justice and would have to pay whatever may be the price for it. That is a king's explanation to another.

However, in the Gita, Sri Krishna answered Arjuna in a nebulous way. He said that Arjuna, he himself and the princes were there before and would be there even in the future. The body alone is born and it dies but the soul is unborn and everlasting. Besides, when one is born, he is sure to die. To a Kshatriya, death in a war like this was a matter of pride and it would be a shame if Arjuna left the warfield without fighting. Arjuna *must* fight to do his duty as a prince.

We consider this answer as nebulous because one does not fight a war with the everlasting soul as it does not kill or get killed. He fights with his body and the body may perish in battle. *This* is the cause for concern. The war, therefore, had to be justified on simple worldly grounds. The Kurukshetra war was a war for justice, for the restoration of the rule of law and against corruption and oppression at the highest level of justice. The issue was discussed at great length in the Udyoga Parva of the Mahabharata and it was concluded that the Pandavas *had* to fight the war, *whatever may be the price*, as otherwise they would be joining the dishonest forces abetting and perpetuating crime and injustice. The Gita side-tracked this ethical issue and went into intricate philosophical and metaphysical discourse in the battlefield, which is normally carried out in the remote forest resorts among the wise seers and teachers.

5. It is common knowledge that in the Gita Sri Krishna calls on Arjuna to awaken, to arise, to give up cowardice and fight. If one tries diligently and intelligently to follow this theme in all the chapters of the Gita, he will soon be lost and confused. Actually, Arjuna told more than once that he was confused. Many concepts have been presented in the Gita with either no or very weak connectivity like in a dream and fight-

1. Arjuna in disguise as the female Brihannala.

ing a war was given the least importance!

The doubts and controversies centred around the Gita are not baseless and they probably haunt all earnest readers of the Gita. We have seen that there *are* people who doubt the relevance of the Gita to the Mahabharata war and treat it as an exposition of the teachings of the Upanishads. They believe that it was interposed at that critical point in the development of the epic as an appropriate allusion to the position of a man in the world with many adversaries to fight and the impossibility of winning unless all efforts are offered as a sacrifice unto God.

Gita—An Integral and Relevant Part of Mahabharata

Fortunately, there are people who lack the pragmatism and the capacity for rationalization which are so essential for peace of mind and cannot accept anything short of an assertion that the Gita is an integral and relevant portion of the Mahabharata. They cannot accept the Gita as a fable.² To them the Gita is *a living experience* and its originality has been *tested* by persons who can discern the real from the unreal like Acharya Shankara. The Gita is not only relevant but it is also an *authentic event* which had profound influence on the Mahabharata.

Gita—A Spiritual Experience

Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu on one special occasion defined the qualification for a true appreciation of the Gita. We have in the *Chaitanya Charitamrita* of Krishnadas Kaviraj Goswami:

In the place of Sriranga lived
many brahmins
They invited him [Chaitanya] by turns
The four (rainy) months thus passed
from day to day

Some of the brahmins did not get
a turn with him
In this place lived a brahmin
devoted to Vishnu
He sat in the temple and recited the Gita
He read the eighteen chapters
in a happy mood
He recited the Gita incorrectly,
and people made fun of it
Some laughed, some others ridiculed,
but he did not care
He read the Gita with gladness of heart
So long as he read,
he shed tears of happiness,
his frame shook, he sweated
Mahaprabhu was filled with happiness
at this sight
Mahaprabhu asked him, 'Tell me, Sir,
What meaning of the Gita gives you
so much pleasure?'
The brahmin said, 'I am ignorant and
know not the meaning of the words
I read the Gita correct and incorrect,
to honour my Guru
I see Krishna holding the reins of
the chariot of Arjuna
He sits there dark and handsome
He is giving Arjuna good counsel
So long as I read the Gita, I get
the vision of Krishna
That is why I cannot stop reading the Gita'
Prabhu said, 'You are the most qualified—
The one who knows
the real meaning of the Gita.'

Clearly, the logic and correct meaning of words are not sufficient to understand the Gita; the real meaning of the Gita is revealed through a visionary experience. We get a confirmation on this when we also find Sri Ramakrishna referring to this episode while speaking about the Gita.³ The Gita is a kind of communication through the superconscious spirit which makes religious experi-

2. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, *Bhagavad Gita: The Song of God*, 'Gita and Mahabharata'.

3. Swami Nikhilananda (Tr.), *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1994), p. 105. [Hereafter, *Gospel*.]

ence in man a possibility.

Nature of Religious Experience

William James, one of the greatest American philosophers and a contemporary of Swami Vivekananda, dealt on this subject in his famous book *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. An article by Eugene Taylor⁴ entitled 'The Transcendent Experience' discussed in depth the ideas of William James as reproduced below:

[William] James defined religion as that which lies within the individual. What occurs in books, what the priesthood tells us, and the ecclesiastical history of all Churches, all this is secondary to what the individual experiences. James maintained that the subconscious was the doorway to religious awakening. By this he meant that most of us spent a great deal of our waking life in a state of consciousness devoted to survival of the bodily organism. Sense data and the cognitive ordering of it are the primary activities that go on unendingly in the process of perpetual adjustment. Below the surface of everyday working consciousness, however, we find a spectrum of states ranging from pathological to transcendent. Sometimes, trauma, conflict or just plain exhaustion causes an opening of the internal doors of perception and the reality of the subconscious depths of our personality is revealed to us. On the other hand, the concrete practice of spiritual discipline also gives an access to those inner states. Spontaneous experience can also happen to a person. In any event, it is the opening of this door, James said in 1902, whether voluntary or involuntary, that leads to the possibility of religious awakening.

While describing this awakening, the author continues,

The first mark of the transcendent or mystical state, James said, was its ineffability. Description of it characteristically takes us to the limits of language and clearly points beyond conceptual thought. Such states are one of feeling, not intellect, and for this reason they are impossible to describe to persons who have not also had them. If your listeners have had them, simply suggesting the general direction they go in is often enough for them to call forth their own flood of ecstatic association and wondrous images.

James was only explaining what Mahaprabhu felt about that brahmin reading the Gita in the Ranganatha Temple. Hindus know that religious experience goes beyond intellectual understanding and they have further knowledge that this experience can be quickened by a powerful teacher. We like to propose that Sri Krishna induced the experience of the Gita in Arjuna. The state of extreme remorse suffered by Arjuna was necessary for him so that he could surrender to the divine will. It was like the purging of the mind before meditation or a sincere confession before a Christian prayer. James noted that passivity was an inherent characteristic of a revelation or mystic experience. In the case of Arjuna, he went to that state through the paralytic expression of the anguish suppressed in his heart for many years, and opened himself to the Gita experience.

James discussed two other characteristics of a religious experience and these appear to fit well with the Gita and answer some of the objections. He mentioned about the transience or the short duration communication. The exposition of the Gita could not have been a long dialogue in a battlefield but was only a transient, short duration opening of the superconscious door. James also said that religious experience is noetic,

4. *Prabuddha Bharata*, February 1995, p. 434.

meaning that the experience is like a visionary understanding. This explains the lack of logical connectivity in the Gita. It is like the opening of a window which brings into view the whole panorama all at once. We discuss these aspects in some detail in the following sections.

The Quickening of Spiritual Experience

Swami Saradananda in his famous biography of Sri Ramakrishna, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lilaprasanga*, has discussed the transmission of knowledge by a touch or even by a mere look from a powerful teacher, citing references from literature and from reports by reliable persons about their own personal experiences. He has presented the Sanskrit text (and the Bengali translation) from some Tantra literature like *Vāyaviya Sainhitā* and *Rudrayāmala* dealing with the topic of initiation by the grace of a teacher.⁵

Swami Saradananda, elsewhere in the *Lilaprasanga*, gives us a narrative of Sri Ramakrishna's transmitting a non-dual experience to Narendranath by his grace.⁶

Again, Swami Nikhilananda has written in his introduction to *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, 'They (his disciples) had convincing proof that the Master would by his mere wish, kindle in their hearts the love of God and give them His vision.'⁷

This idea has been used by writers in popular literature. Siddhartha, the hero of the Hermann Hesse story, transmitted a spirit to his friend Govinda by touch so that he could see Siddhartha evolving through the successive stages from an animal state to the stage of liberation. He could see them all

simultaneously, time standing still! (Hermann Hesse, *Siddhartha*). We like to propose that it was in this manner that Arjuna received the Gita at the battlefield.

Acharya Shankara in his *Dakshinamurti Stotra* has depicted the teacher illuminating by his grace the heart of the disciple with knowledge. Sri Krishna is the Dakshinamurti, the embodiment of grace, bliss and contentment of the inner soul. He is explaining by a silent communion and is removing all doubts and confusion from the mind of Arjuna.

The Relevance of the Gita in the Mahabharata

An objection has been raised, as we saw earlier, that the Gita appeared out of place and did not fit into the main theme of the Mahabharata. But on serious thinking, this objection would be found unsound. The Kurukshetra war was a historical necessity. Corruption and injustice had taken strong hold in all the principalities of the country and humanity was crying for relief. The most fascinating feature of this phenomenon was the fact that the cycle started with benevolent and godly persons around whom power accumulated, but soon that very power for good started breeding corruption and, more the power, more the corruption. Duryodhana's brothers, Bhagadatta, Jayadratha, the Yadu princes and others were all protected by either saintly persons like Drona, Bhishma and Sri Krishna or by powerful boons like the boon of Narayana to Goddess Earth protecting Bhagadatta. The epics and traditions in India treat this feature as a part of the natural process and postulate the incarnation of Vishnu with his associates under such conditions so that injustice and oppression could be redressed and a just order could be re-established. Vyasa told Dhritarashtra after the war that he was privy to a conference in the court of Brahma where Goddess Earth

5. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master*, (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1970), p. 609-10.

6. Ibid., p. 763-6.

7. *Gospel*, p. 47.

was assured of the incarnation of Vishnu in the form of Sri Krishna and of the Kurukshetra war so that she would not have to suffer the unjust princes for long.⁸

Thus we find that in the Mahabharata the stage had been set and the roles of the major actors had been assigned. It was more or less known that in the war to be waged between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, the ruling princes of India would be killed and the big stalwarts who were supposedly invincible would all die. It was also known that the Pandavas helped by Sri Krishna would be the victors and Arjuna would be the principal warrior responsible for the killing of the main bulk of the Dhritarashtra army. Even before the war, all the giant warlords like Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Shalya and others fighting for Duryodhana were aware about it; they knew that they would get killed in the war. What was not so clear to all, but was known to a few including Sri Krishna, was that even from the Pandava army only a few would survive. All the relatives loved by the Pandavas, including their own children, died in the war. The Pandavas killed Bhishma and Drona, but the war left them bereft of all zest and purpose of living.

Left to natural forces, the Pandavas too could turn despotic, autocratic and oppressive. Under the protection of Sri Krishna, the Pandavas could follow the Yadavas—indulgent, dissipative, lazy and given to easy, decadent life; Arjuna particularly could mistake the victory as his personal achievement. That would have defeated the whole purpose of the war, the remedy would have been even worse than the disease. Earth would have been burdened with another oppressive prince! It was, therefore, very important that the cosmic mystery be unfolded to Arjuna and that he wholly cooperate with Sri Krishna in giving lead to a new

world order. It would at once serve two purposes: the divine will would be fulfilled and the sin of killing would not bind Arjuna, it would rather liberate him from the cycle of action—good and bad. It was the Gita which determined the post-war course of the Mahabharata and this is an essential link in the story.

The Anguish of Arjuna

After the war was over, Dhritarashtra was in deep mourning over the loss of his sons and grandsons and was beyond consolation. Vedavyasa himself came to explain that the whole affair had been planned at the highest level of the divinity to which he chanced to be a witness. Narada warned Yudhishthira about it during the Rajasuya sacrifice and Yudhishthira, in turn, discussed it with Vyasa. Yudhishthira had tried his utmost to evade this holocaust and suffered all privations only for the sake of keeping peace between the cousins but he could not stop the more powerful and the inevitable forces of divine justice. We quote at length the relevant part⁹ from the Mahabharata, as it is necessary to reproduce the original to bring out fact from fiction. (We suggest the reader to refer to the sources for more details.)

King Yudhishthira took hold of the feet of his grandfather and said, 'Your holiness, the godly Narada prophesied that three kinds of troubles originating from the heavens, the outer space and the earth will inflict us. Have they passed away with the fall of Prince Shishupala? I have great concern about it and, grandfather, nobody other than you can resolve this point!'

On hearing this, Vyasa said, 'O king, these three kinds of troubles will arise after thirteen years. All the Kshatriyas will be killed in this event. On account of sins committed by Duryodhana against you and through the strength of Bhima

8. Mahabharata, Strī Parva.

9. Ibid., Sabhā Parva.

and Arjuna, all the princes will be killed in course of time. O king, tomorrow at dawn you will have a dream of Mahadeva, the destroyer of the three cities, mounted on his bull, looking towards south,¹⁰ the region of the death god. O lord of the world, do not get alarmed by this dream, because nobody can pass over Time. May you be in peace and may you rule over the earth with equanimity, calm and self-restraint.'

Yudhisthira addressed his brothers and said, 'O best of men, have you heard what Dwaipayana has said? I have decided to give up my life on hearing him. If in course of time, I be the cause for the destruction of all the Kshatriyas, what then is the purpose for my living?' Dhananjaya replied, 'My lord, do not get carried away by the terrible mind-boggling delusion. You decide on the right course of action after proper deliberation.' Yudhisthira, who by nature held to the right way, thought over what Vyasa Deva told and then addressed his brothers, 'My brothers, may good fortune be on you, hear my resolve. Henceforth, I shall not use any intemperate language with you or other princes. I shall live under the guidance of the family elders and practise yoga. I shall treat my children and the common people alike so that there can be no cause for any conflict with me. If I live for the next thirteen years, I shall not do anything else.' When Yudhisthira was in this frame of mind, he got the invitation for the game of dice from the Kuru court and we find Yudhisthira accepting the game as an order from the Kuru elders with minor, superficial protests.

People get surprised by the reckless behaviour of Yudhisthira during the dice game. But it is quite easy to read his mind. Nobody justifies suicide and the dice game

offered an excellent opportunity to him to achieve his objective: to be a beggar in the street, to be a non-entity who cannot cause a war and a total destruction of the Kshatriyas in the country! We can read the agony in his mind which again is shared by his brothers, from the haste with which he lost everything in the game: his kingdom, his wealth, his brothers and even his own freedom. He thought that he had achieved his goal without any effort! But this was not to be. Yudhisthira was the lord over all of Bharata (India) and this could not be wished away. By provoking him, destiny had bound him to a war thirteen years hence and the prophesies of Narada and Vyasa were sealed and stamped, and the way it happened is well known. The joy in the Dhritarashtra camp knew no bounds and in the madness of celebration, they won Draupadi in the game, dragged her to the court and abused her, unprotected as she was, in front of the whole assembly. The Mahabharata says that the crime was so immense that the very foundation of the kingdom shook, daylight dimmed, mute animals started crying and the brahmins, who reflect the spirit of the country, stopped their afternoon prayer. In fear, Dhritarashtra restored everything to Yudhisthira and, in a replay of the game, it was settled that the Pandavas would live twelve years in exile and a thirteenth year incognito, after which they would get back their property.

Thus, instead of being a non-entity, Yudhisthira remained the emperor in exile, and the five brothers with Draupadi suffered hardship and humiliation. Everyday Draupadi fanned their anger reminding them that her humiliation had not yet been avenged. Helpless, they grieved over the deaths that they would inflict on their dearest persons. We are used to thinking of Bhimasena as one ever ready to kill the Duryodhana brothers and drink their blood, and what a surprise when we hear him briefing

10. An ominous sign.

Sri Krishna about his view before the latter went to Hastinapur on the peace mission! Much to the dismay of Draupadi and Sri Krishna, we hear Bhimasena plead with Sri Krishna to buy peace at *any* price, and we come to understand that he loved not only the Kuru elders and children but also the bad cousins. In a rare moment, he exposed the bleeding hearts that the Pandavas had been hiding for thirteen years. To the last day of their lives, the Pandavas suffered the agony destined by fate. *The reason we consider them great and worthy of emulation is that they did not shirk away from their responsibilities, however unpleasant and sad these might be. They fought the war with the full knowledge of what they were doing.*

We now give two excerpts from the chapter on preparations for the war (Udyoga Parva) of the Mahabharata which will show that Arjuna was fully aware of the nature of the enemy he had to fight and Arjuna deliberately selected the role of the principal warrior.

The first excerpt is a dialogue between Yudhishthira and Arjuna on the eve of their marching to Kurukshetra:

The king of justice sighed at the thought that despite their being bound by blood, they would have to kill their kinsmen in the war and told Bhimasena and Arjuna, 'Brothers, the danger of the destruction of our family is now approaching us in an inevitable manner, although to avoid this we have gone through all sufferings in the forest. The cares we have taken to forestall this danger have all gone fruitless. We did not prepare for the war, but a monstrous war has come about. I do not know how we are going to be engaged in war with respected family members who should not be killed; or win the war by killing the elderly honourable persons who deserve our personal regards.'

Thereafter Arjuna repeated what Sri Krishna had reported (about his peace mission) and said, 'Your Majesty, you have heard from Sri Krishna what our mother Kunti and uncle Vidura have said and have understood them. I feel certain that what they have said is in accordance with just social rule. It will be improper for you to refrain from the war now.' Then Vasudeva smilingly approved Arjuna. The Pandavas spent the night amidst their army very happily after taking a firm resolution to fight the war.

The second quotation is also from the same chapter and is a dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, when the latter opted for Sri Krishna in preference to the Narayani battalion. Arjuna told Sri Krishna:

'My lord, there is no doubt that you can destroy the forces of Dhritarashtra and that your fame spreads over the three worlds. I like to earn great fame by destroying them myself and that is why I have opted for you, though knowing that you will not fight in the war. It is my earnest request that you fulfil my long cherished desire by agreeing to drive my chariot.'

It is therefore clear that Arjuna was strong enough to live with the anguish and Sri Krishna induced it as a prelude to the Gita in place of the common belief that Arjuna had a breakdown in front of the army and Sri Krishna had to restore his spirit by imparting the teachings of the Gita. As we have said before, the anguish only made Arjuna surrender to Sri Krishna and opened his soul to the Gita experience, making him express that all delusion had left him and he was willing to do Sri Krishna's bidding.

William James wrote:

The mother sea and fountainhead of all religions lie in the mystical experience of the individual and when mystical ex-

periences do occur, it is as if the person is grasped and held by a superior power.

The anguish of Arjuna was the doorway to the revelation of the Gita. Arjuna was paralysed by an upsurge of his lifelong sufferings and the realization that the Pandavas were the playthings of destiny and could do nothing of their free will. He submitted to the overpowering grace of Sri Krishna and told that he was his disciple and would do as he would be instructed. This was the precondition for the revelation of the Gita.

In conclusion, we would like to draw attention to what Sri Krishna himself had said about the Gita when Arjuna requested him on a later occasion to teach the Gita. Sri Krishna said that the Gita experience was given to Arjuna in yoga and could not be repeated.

Summing Up

Vedanta describes the departure of the soul from the body at death. After gathering all the vital functions in a subtle body, the soul rests in the Lord and finds the heart getting luminous. In an instant, the entire history of its sojourn through innumerable cycles of life comes to its memory and it gets a foreknowledge of the life to come. The soul, with the subtle body, then departs from the body through an appropriate opening.¹¹

11. *Brahma Sutras*, 4.2.17, (Sankara's commentary).

Life is a wonderful platform where all opposites meet and reconcile finding expression in ever so many ways. If someone could freeze the rich experience of a wise and illumined liberated soul at the instant of the total flash-back prior to leaving the body, we would get a most wonderful picture, more interesting than any fiction and more profound than any philosophy. In the Gita, we find a record of this kind. Sri Krishna illumined the innermost dark recess in the heart of Arjuna with his light, and all the conflicting ideas in Arjuna got defined and resolved. Here, we find the trivial and the sublime juxtaposed like in real life where diverse principles and information are packed in a complex manner. One gets lost while trying to follow a rational track in reading the Gita and it becomes clear that the view presented there has been taken from a much higher, may be the highest, vantage point and this has been called by various terms like 'united in yoga', 'steady in Brahman', 'nirvana in Brahman', etc. It was the magic power of Vedavyasa that made it possible for Sanjaya to report it for our benefit, as he himself acknowledged it towards the end of the Gita.

The commentaries on the Gita are all excellent expositions of its different facets, and what is important for us is to approach them with humility, looking upon them as aids to its appreciation. We can only continue to recite the Gita and pray that some day the Gita reveals her real nature and beauty to us giving us everlasting joy. □

Atman or Spirit is not mind. It is beyond mind. It is not matter or force, but it is the illuminator of matter and force. It is the cause of our conscious existence or individuality. It is the cause of our intelligence. It is described as a circle whose circumference is nowhere, whose centre is everywhere. It is omnipresent, omnipotent and possesses infinite powers, infinite wisdom, and infinite possibilities. This Atman is our real Self, our divine nature.

—Swami Abhedananda, *Precepts for Perfection*, p. 11

Māyā, in the Light of Swami Vivekananda

DR. SANGHAMITRA DASGUPTA

The learned author, Dr. Sanghamitra Dasgupta, in analysing the concept of Māyā according to Swami Vivekananda finds it to be different from the traditional Shankarite interpretation as a principle of 'world-negation' or 'illusion'. According to Swami Vivekananda, Māyā is a statement of fact regarding the world which is an 'undefinable mixture of reality and appearance'. Says the author, 'The universe with all its miseries and pains is as real as God.' The realization of the oneness of existence as the ideal and the consequent practice of the moral code of self-abnegation and of service to all beings as manifestations of the Divine are highlighted in this article.

There are many erroneous notions about the Advaita Vedānta philosophy. One of such prevalent notions is that it advocates an attitude of world-negation. In other words, according to Advaita Vedānta, the world never existed in the past, does not exist in the present, nor will it exist in the future. Such an attitude has been associated with the concept of *māyā*. Needless to say, there are innumerable descriptions of the concept of *māyā* in the Vedas and the Upaniṣads. Shankara interprets *māyā* in a fashion that lends support to his non-dualistic metaphysics. In later days, many thinkers wrote commentaries and sub-commentaries on Advaita Vedānta. Even among the twentieth century interpreters, Prabhu Dutta Shastri has taken the word *māyā* in the sense of 'illusion'.¹ Swami Vivekananda, however, who is considered to be one of the finest flowers in modern Indian philosophy, interprets *māyā* in such a way that it retains the sublime stand of the traditional non-dualistic Vedānta and also claims freedom from the interpretations of *māyā* as the principle of 'world-negation' or 'illusion'. Vivekananda is well known for his luminous description of the multiplicity and perplexity of the world appearance in modern times.²

The doctrine of *māyā* is presented by the Orthodox Vedāntins in order to solve the problem as to how the One appears as the 'many'. This particular issue is approached by Swami Vivekananda, on the theoretical side, by his saying, 'Questions of how, why, or wherefore relate to the manifested world, and not to the Unmanifested, which is above all change and causation, and therefore above all relation to the changing universe.... The question, therefore, is not one which can be reasonably put.'³ From the experiential point of view Swamiji maintained, 'that the Many and the One are the same Reality, perceived by the same mind at different times and in different attitudes.'⁴ To him what is Real (Brahman) is mani-

1. Prabhu Dutta Shastri, 'The Doctrine of Maya', *Philosophy of Vedānta* (London: Luzac, 1911), p. 53.

2. By modern Indian philosophy, we mean the philosophical enterprise that is unwilling to break connection with the past and yet open to the good influence of the novel ideas. A modern thinker of Indian philosophy is said to be one who can stretch the sublime thoughts of old moulds without breaking them. In short, a modernist both respects tradition and claims freedom from it.

3. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* by His Eastern and Western Disciples (2 vols.) (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1993), vol. 2, p. 197.

4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 8, p. 261. [Hereafter, *Complete Works*.]

fested in the world in multi-dimensional hues. The manifestation itself is not different from the Reality. According to him, the world, therefore, is not to be denied. Man is 'the greatest God that ever was or ever will be'⁵. The motto of an Advaitin is 'All that exists is verily Brahman'. Romain Rolland says, 'He (Swamiji) does not reject anyone of the proposed attempts at explanation (of *maya*), but from each he seeks to extract the grain of permanent reality'.⁶

From this standpoint Vivekananda's view of *maya* is to be understood. For him, *maya* is 'neither Idealism nor Realism, nor is it a theory. It is a simple statement of facts—what we are and what we see around us.'⁷

The term *maya* has been used sometimes to mean the Power of Brahman or *Śakti* by virtue of which Brahman projects the world of names and forms. This power does not affect Brahman even as the magical powers do not affect the magician. Again when it is said that the world is *maya*, the word is used to express the indescribable nature of the world which is neither *sat* nor *asat*. Vivekananda is in agreement with the Shankarites who admit that *maya* is the Power of Brahman and also the principle of change, *Śakti*, which makes world projection possible. He, however, differs from them in point of emphasis when they describe *maya* as a power that creates illusion, the power because of which man wrongly thinks this illusory, multiplistic world to be real. Swamiji did not ordinarily use the term *maya* in that sense. As a practical Vedantist, his concept of *maya* does not negate the world at all. Therefore, it may seem to be contradictory to the traditional Shankarite interpretation, of the world-negation theory.

Rather, Swamiji proposes a world-affirmation theory.

Vivekananda is of opinion that the term *maya* has been limited by most of our philosophers to denote illusion or delusion which is not the only perspective from which it is to be understood. Though Vivekananda does not specifically mention the name of Shankara as one who uses the word *maya* to mean illusion, yet it is evident from his writings that Swamiji never accepts the view of Shankarites who feel the world we live in is an illusion. To Swamiji what is Real (Brahman) is manifested in the world in multi-dimensional hues. The manifestation itself is not different from the Reality. This is monism, since it recognizes Brahman as the *only* reality. The world is only a projection on the reality.

We perceive the world only through the medium of the mind and the senses. Our minds are limited. They cannot go beyond certain boundaries. It is the very condition of our relative knowledge that no one can go beyond the limits of time, space and law of causation. The relative world only exists in relation to time-space-causation or *maya*. We see this world with our five senses, and if we had another sense, it would appear to us as something very different from that which we now perceive. Therefore, the relative world is not unchangeable, immovable, or an Absolute Reality. It is an undefinable mixture of existence (as Brahman) and non-existence (being relative).

Yudhishtira, one of the eminent characters of the Mahabharata was once asked, 'What is the most surprising thing in this world?' He replied, 'Everyday people are dying around us and yet men hope that they will never die.' It is a statement of fact and Vivekananda remarks, this is *maya*. *Maya* defies any categorical statement with regard to the perplexity of the world but points out to the in-built contradiction. This notion of *maya* as explained by Vivekananda may be interpreted in the following way for our

5. *Complete Works*, vol. 7, p. 78.

6. *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel*, tr. E.V. Malcom-Smith (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1982), p. 180.

7. *Complete Works*, vol. 2, p. 89.

better understanding.

Vivekananda has described *maya* as a statement of facts as they exist, for to him the very basis of our being is a contradiction. To Vivekananda the characteristic features of an object are not to be taken as final, for, the object does also exhibit contrary features. This concept of *maya* is in conformity with the etymological meaning of the term which comes from the root '*ma*' (meaning to measure). That which limits something is *maya*, which indicates the veiling characteristic of it. The object as it seems to us gives a partial picture of the actual object, and its other aspects are hidden. That is why, each and every statement of fact is *maya*, a measured expression of the immeasurable.

Maya is not, for Vivekananda, a theory for the explanation of the world, a world which according to him is an undefinable mixture of reality and appearance. In the whole world, our total experiences are going through this tremendous contradiction. It denotes that the world is a mixture of good and evil, of life and death. These are not unreal for Vivekananda, but are different limited manifestations of the Divine and his concept of *maya* is to be viewed from this standpoint. *Maya* cannot be characterized by the term existence or non-existence although both are unavoidable facts of our lives. 'It is an intermediate form between the equally Absolute Being and non-Being. Hence it is the Relative'.⁸ However, Vivekananda admits that *maya* has a reality from the lower point of view only. But he never uses the English word 'illusion' as a synonym for the word *maya*. The attempt to translate the word in such a way is neither happy nor correct.⁹

Vivekananda, therefore, interprets *maya* in a sense slightly different from that

of the traditional view. The world is considered as false by some Advaitins whereas *alika* (unreal) by some others, and the jiva (individual being) which passes through the diverse experiences of worldly life, is merely the appearance of Pure Consciousness. But Vivekananda did not give such an illusory status to the world and the individual being. The universe with all its miseries and pains is as real as God. It is the manifestation of the Divine, and man is the highest form of manifestation of the Divine. Everything that we see or feel is the manifestation or the projection of God. The spiritual advancement which Vivekananda wants to bring is the recognition of Divinity in every creature, high or low. The highest truth can be achieved through the service of God in man, seeing Shiva in the Jiva, which according to him is the most effective means of self-purification and the realization of Brahman.

The universe is not unreal (*asat*). His Master, Sri Ramakrishna, did not treat the world as illusion. Sri Ramakrishna explained that if the Self exists then the non-Self must also exist.¹⁰ Vivekananda had learnt from his Master to take the universe as a play of Brahman. The other name of this play is *maya*. The universe has its significance, 'in freedom it rises, in freedom it rests, and into freedom it melts away'.¹¹ Nothing in the universe is to be rejected. The beautiful play of hide and seek of sorrows and joys are quite natural, without them life would be insipid indeed. For him the worldly problems were so important that he could boldly declare: 'Bread! Bread! I do not believe in a God who cannot give me bread here and can give me eternal bliss in heaven.'¹² He realized that material civilization was necessary to create work for the poor people, and,

8. Romain Rolland prefers the term 'Relativity', vide *The Life of Vivekananda as the Universal Gospel*, op. cit. pp. 181-2.

9. *Complete Works*, vol. 2, p. 105.

10. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1994), p. 328.

11. Ibid.

12. *The Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1977), p. 141.

therefore, was not an obstacle to spiritual realization.

However, Vivekananda remains silent regarding the question: why is there *maya*? He has ruled out any 'how' or 'why' regarding *maya*. He only wants to emphasize the fact that the entire phenomenal world is under the jurisdiction of *maya*. His main interest was to fill his countrymen with spiritual strength and present before them ideals. The veil of *maya* has covered our very Self. As a result, our Real Nature is unknown to us and we are confused. We make distinctions such as 'I' and 'you'. But we have to unmask the veil of *maya* to realize our innermost being which is the fountainhead of all existence. When we are under *maya*, we see phenomenon and do not see the noumenon. A true Advaitin realizes that there is but one Atman, there cannot be two infinities. The One Existence when it is seen through the senses is perceived as the world, the world of thoughts, ideas, names and forms. When it is seen in its true essence, it is experienced as the One Infinite Being. As soon as we realize that behind everything the same Divinity exists, we know that in injuring another, we are injuring ourselves. In loving another, we are loving ourselves. The sense of duality brings hatred and jealousy, misery and struggle, and other so-called evils. From the realization of Oneness springs the principle of morality which Vivekananda calls 'self-abnegation'.¹³ He regards that when a man has become ready to give up his life for the lowest being, he has reached the perfection of Advaita. This state is called in Vedanta, the state of *jīvanmukti*, free while living. In this state, ignorance has vanished

and yet the body remains. Therefore, a *jīvanmukta* can do work, but he will not be deluded. 'Mukti' in Vivekananda's thought means freedom from one's narrow outlook by cultivating a broader view while living in the phenomenal world. Such a one will be selfless, fearless, and sensitive to the joys and sufferings of others. This is the goal of Vedanta, and consciously or unconsciously, the whole universe is going towards that goal.

For Swami Vivekananda the distinction between the Absolute (Brahman) and God (*Saguṇa Brahman*) as made by some Advaitins, is redundant. As a matter of fact, Swami Vivekananda's philosophy of God has been shaped by the simple teachings of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, who explained the distinction between the formless and that having forms (*Nirākāra* and *Sākāra*), with the analogy of water and ice. There is no fundamental difference between the two. One is not more real than the other. Rather it indicates that there are infinite dimensions to the manifestation of Reality. As a result of this, there may be a variety of approaches to Reality.

For Swami Vivekananda, the controversy among the different approaches to Reality in no way affects the nature of Reality. It is perhaps for this fact that Swami Vivekananda's sole intention was to bring the Truth of Vedanta within the easy reach of the masses. For Shankara, from the transcendental standpoint, the world-creation is unreal. His emphasis was on the yoga of discriminative knowledge. However, from the empirical standpoint Swami Vivekananda, emphasizing more the need for karma (work), tries to strike a balance between the two extreme positions without contradicting the basic Advaitic principle of non-duality. Swami Vivekananda argues that since the world is a creation of God, and since God is the only Reality and God creates the world and becomes immanent in His creation, the world is an aspect of the Reality and should

13. By 'self-abnegation' Vivekananda means the realization of the true essence of a man through the cancellation of his individualized self. His little personalized self which makes him different from others is the cause of all his miseries.—*Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 364.

be regarded as empirically real so long as one has not awakened to the perfect knowledge of its transcendental nature. It is not unreal or an illusion. For Vivekananda, like Shankara, the word 'mithya' has a specific technical sense. It refers to the impermanence, constantly changing, and varying nature of the universe (*Sañcarati iti sañsāraḥ*). The thing is said to be 'mithya' (false) in multi-valued Vedantic logic, if it has no fixed or absolute characteristics (*lakṣaṇa*). It is not opposed to the Truth or the Real. According to Vivekananda, by the word 'mithya' a Vedantin intends to emphasize that the world (*jagat*) as the expression of Brahman cannot be totally zero. If everything is Brahman, then the world is not outside of Brahman. In this he differed with Shankara perhaps only in a point of emphasis that the beginner in spiritual life should not call the world non-existent, as that is not his experience.

The world process is not a complete one but a continuous flow from subtle form to its grosser form. Likewise, truth reveals in many shades and degrees. For Vivekananda, man is potentially Divine and thus the goal of our life is to realize this Divinity that is already in us. This may be treated as the precise ground of difference (one of emphasis) between his interpretation of *maya* and Shankara's. In the Shankarite interpretation, emphasis is on *maya* as the deluding power of the Creator and the illusory status of the world is a mere magical creation of *maya*, while, Vivekananda asserts that *maya* is to be taken as a fact about the contradictory nature of the universe by the spiritual seeker who wants liberation from its delusive powers. Without contradicting the Advaitic view that *maya* is a power for the creation of the world, Vivekananda places the world somewhere between Absolute Being and non-being.

In our world of experience, we get awareness of the relation of things and not the precise knowledge of things in their es-

sence. In 'Practical Vedanta' of Vivekananda, the reality of the world has been maintained along with the metaphysical Absolute of Shankara. The world is an important stepping stone leading to the ultimate realization of the unity underlying multiplicity and *maya* states only the status of the world as subject to space-time-causation. Perhaps this is the reason why it is said that the monistic philosophy of Vivekananda is not sheer continuation of the traditional philosophy. In the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, Shankara describes *maya* as the unmanifested power of Brahman and the material cause of the creation of the world. The existence of *maya* is to be inferred from the world of multiplicity as its effects.¹⁴ But Vivekananda is not interested in giving such explanations. He neither regards the world as the effect of our individual ignorance (*avidyā*) nor mentions in his writings that *maya* is the material cause of the world. He is rather satisfied with describing the world as it is. That is, it is a fact, consisting of a mixture of being and becoming. In other words, Vivekananda does not advance any new theory of *maya* as mere knowledge of theory is not essential for our mukti or liberation. Rather, he describes our present experience of the relative world and says that *maya* is just a statement of fact about the world in which we live.

Vivekananda's philosophy may be regarded thus as a new interpretation of traditional Vedanta in the sense that within the boundary of monistic philosophy, it retains the world as well as God. We find a wonderful synthesis of knowledge, devotion and action in his Neo-Vedanta. For him, the realm of the Absolute of Shankara and the realm of the reality of the world, are only

14. *Avyakta-nāmnī paramēśasaktir-
anādyavidyā triguṇātmikā parā;
Kāryāmumeyā sudhīyaiva māyā
yayā jagatsarvavidam prasūyate.*

— *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, verse 108.

two dimensions of one and the same Reality. According to Vivekananda, the creation of the world of multiplicity, with constant flux on the seat of one Brahman, is not illusory. He rather tries to interpret the basic spiritualistic tenets of traditional Vedanta philosophy in the light of rationalistic as well as scientific outlooks of his time. So *maya* is a statement of fact, a description of what is going on, but not a doctrine or theory for the explanation of the world.¹⁵

To put it otherwise, according to Vivekananda, each and every object is *maya* in the sense of relativity. Vivekananda has advocated such a non-traditional interpretation of *maya* after considering the socio-economic situation of the country of his time. The Shankarite interpretation of *maya*, he judged, should be altered to suit the need of the age. Sri Shankara's emphasis on knowledge versus action as the means to liberation had to be adjusted. Due to inactivity people

had fallen into the torpor of sleep and inertia. Hence he wanted to awaken them by emphasizing the philosophy of action as found in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. To sum up, it may be said that Vivekananda could not accept any view that described the world as *maya* in the sense of its being illusion, because he was primarily concerned with the empirical world. In his different features, he has given the material aspect of individual's life as much importance as the spiritual. Even he advises people to fulfil first their material needs and afterwards take to religion or spirituality. Thus, no world-negating, life-denying attitude was acceptable to him. No bodily or material object is illusory, but it is as real as Spirit. To him all human beings are the manifestations of Divinity and service of human beings, to him, is the service of God. This he taught leads to personal liberation and the good of the world as well. □

15. It is interesting to note in the passing that Rabindranath Tagore, the poet philosopher also does not accept *maya* as delusion. For him *maya* is a self-imposed limitation of the Absolute. Shankara says that the world is *maya* and it is neither real nor unreal nor both. Rabindranath, on the contrary, says that *maya* has being since the finitude which is produced by *maya* is a matter of empirical apprehension; it has non-being, since when infinity is realized, *maya* ceases to exist.

Rabindranath could not admit such a standpoint with regard to the status of the world as something illusory. He is not a traveller in the path of knowledge only for spiritual realization. His is rather a synthesis of knowledge, action and devotion. He is interested to bring to our notice the image

of man as total being who realizes one Absolute in and through the variegated hues. He does not believe in asceticism or renunciation of the world and thus in the 'Naivedya', he says, 'Deliverance is not for me in renunciation, I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight'. (*Vairāgya sādhanē muktī, se āmār noi, asankhya bandhan mājhe mahānandanoy labhiyā muktir svād*, 'Naivedya', verse 30, in *Rabindra Ranganāvalī*, vol. 4, Visva Bharati, 1394 B.S., p. 281). Like Vaiṣṇava philosophers, Tagore in *The Religion of Man*, puts forward the opinion that the finite being is a very significant part in the scheme of the Universe and *maya*, for him, the creative energy of the Absolute.

Change is often resisted because every change is a challenge that few are prepared to take up.

—Dr. P. Dhanavel, Agartala

Letters of Swami Abhedananda*

7-2-[18]96

My dear Jwaladuttjee,

Day before yesterday we arrived here safe and sound. All of our brothers here are now doing well. You should write every now and then to me. Our best love and good wishes to you. Tender our best love to Babu Sunderramjee. Hoping you are all right,

I remain
Yours sincerely,
Avedananda

P.S. I am glad to inform you that the *Baidya* Nobogopal Babu, under whose treatment you remained for some time, is now going to Allahabad for a change. Within 5 or 6 days he will reach Allahabad. He inquired about your health. He will shortly see you. And I hope you will describe all the symptoms of your disease.

Yours
A.

Invitation

Dear Sir,

The Birthday Anniversary of Bhagavan Sri Ramkrishna Deva will be celebrated on Sunday the 16th of February 1896, at Rani Rashmony's Kalibari, Dakshineswar. Your presence and co-operation respectfully solicited.

The Math

Alambazar, Baranagore P.O., Calcutta

The 20th January, 1896

Disciples

श्री श्री रामकृष्ण जयति

Math
10-2-[18]96

My dear Jwaladuttjee,

Your letter of the 5th Inst. duly to hand. Perhaps by this time you have received my letter with invitation. Grand preparations are being made to celebrate the birthday anniversary of our Lord in a grand scale. I am really sorry to think that the pure, moral and religious *Bhakta* like your noble self will not be present on such an occasion to feast his eyes by various sorts of religious entertainments for which [this land?] is most famous. However you need not be sorry for that as your circumstances do not allow you to come down here by this time.

I will try to send you as soon as possible two copies of the cabinet size photo of our Lord by V.P.P. May I ask for whom do you want these photos?

Whatever you wish to send in the shape of your offering for the worship you may send to Swami Ramakrishnananda in the address of the *math*. May the blessings of Bhagavan Ramakrishna be on you. Our best love and good wishes to you. Hoping you are all right,

I remain,
Yours &c
Avedananda

All of us here are now doing well.

All the swamis in the *math* are sending their love & good wishes to you.

* Xerox copies of these letters written in 1896 were acquired by Swami Mumukshanandaji Maharaj through the courtesy of Dr. Mallickarjun Joshi, the great-grandson of Jwala Dutt Joshi.

Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Lucknow: Its Activities

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

In this review of the activities of the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama at Lucknow, Revered Swami Sridharanandaji Maharaj, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and the secretary of the institution, gives a vivid picture of the inception and growth of the activities of the Sevashrama and of the Math. We have in the following pages an illustrated account of the blossoming of the hearts of a few youth by the inspiration they received from the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. What started in a humble way at Aminabad has over the years grown into a modern Sevashrama with activities extending into nearby villages.

The Inception

A band of young people, inspired by the lofty teachings of Swami Vivekananda, started the Sevashrama in a simple way in 1914. The dedicated and selfless service of these young karma-yogins helped the all-round growth of the institution through various odds. Gradually, the social and religious activities of the institution went on expanding. It acquired a plot of land at Aminabad and constructed its own buildings with the help of generous people and devotees. By 1925 its activities had become consolidated to the satisfaction of the authorities of Belur Math, and the Sevashrama became affiliated to the Ramakrishna Mission.

The Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama continued to function for nearly forty-three years at the site at Aminabad, extending with dedication social, cultural and religious services to the local people without distinction of caste, creed or colour. With public sympathy, cooperation and help received from various sources, its activities, particularly in the field of medical services, expanded. In the post-independence period, the accommodation and the space available at Aminabad was found to be far too inadequate for meeting the increasing public de-

mand for its services, particularly its medical service.

Shifting to the Present Site

The Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, with the benign help of the State Government, secured in 1961-62 an allotment of the plot of land on which the Ashrama is presently located, in the Trans-Gomati area, for establishing the Vivekananda Polyclinic and for continuing its medical and health, religious and cultural services.

The Vivekananda Polyclinic was a bold and ambitious scheme to set up a medical centre of a new type with up-to-date modern diagnostic facilities and to provide, mainly the out-patients, with *liberal domiciliary medical services*. The Ashrama at Aminabad was shifted to the new site at Vivekananda Puri in January 1967. As the Ashrama had very little resources of its own to build the Vivekananda Polyclinic, this scheme was merely a fond dream. However, by the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna, this distant dream became a tangible reality. Through the untiring efforts and perseverance of many devoted souls, with financial assistance from the Government, with helpful cooperation and support from different quarters, the first

phase was completed. In June 1970, twelve well-equipped Outpatient Departments started functioning in the new building. Gradually the number of departments grew.

Services Rendered at Present

The growth of the Ashrama was guided by local circumstances and the public need. The emphasis besides the educational, religious and cultural activities has been largely on the medical and health centre basing it on the practical truth that *rendering relief to the suffering people, if done in the right spirit, is true worship of God*. The following paragraphs deal mainly with the social service activities rendered by the Ashrama in the medical and health sector.

Medical and Health Services:

Vivekananda Polyclinic

The Vivekananda Polyclinic started functioning in the financial year 1969–70. The Polyclinic has, over the years, developed into a prominent and unique medical centre in the state. It has been providing extensive diagnostic facilities and specialized treatment for various diseases.

The Vivekananda Polyclinic has adopted three systems of treatment for the patients: *Allopathic, Homoeopathic and Ayurvedic*. In 1993, the *Naturopathic and Yogic Therapy Cell* were added to the Physiotherapy Department. The patients may choose the system of treatment for which they have a fancy.

For a developing country like India curtailed by limited resources and complicated by its teeming population, it is hardly feasible to have an adequate provision for indoor beds for treatment. The Polyclinic has therefore given a new lead in placing *emphasis on domiciliary treatment in the Outdoor Department*, which is suitable to our economy. It has thus only a limited number of beds for the treatment of patients who need hospitalization. This system of working has reduced to a certain extent the pres-

sure on indoor beds, particularly in the medical ward.

The *Out-patient Departments* remain open for eight hours on all working days (i.e. excluding Sundays and declared holidays). Treatment by specialists is made available to the patients. The hospital has 55 medical staff, 70 administrative staff (including assistants), and about 300 paramedical, nursing, maintenance and other allied staff. To provide better services to the patients, *private practice by medical and other personnel of the Polyclinic is strictly prohibited*. The Polyclinic has also full facilities and medical staff for Radiology, Pathology and other investigations and tests.

An *Ayurvedic Section* in the *Outdoor Department* was also started in November 1976.

The *Indoor Department* was opened in 1972–73 with provision for 100 beds. The number of beds was increased to 150 in September 1993. Yet, temporary arrangements have often to be made for additional beds to meet emergencies.

With the opening of the Indoor Department, the need for a *Blood Transfusion Unit* was felt acutely, and it was set up during the year 1973–74.

For a better utilization of available talents and other facilities and services of the existing Gynaecology section, a *Maternity Section* was opened in a small way during 1975–76. A good number of beds are being currently used for maternity cases out of the overall existing strength of 150 beds.

A round-the-clock *Emergency Service* for both intensive care as well as for intensive coronary care was started on 1 April 1982. With a view to improving and giving better services to the patients, the original 4-bedded facility was increased to 13 beds out of which three are provided in an air-conditioned room with bed-side Cardiac Monitor.

Free treatment to the members of the public (excluding cases discussed below) is given in the Polyclinic to those only who

have no or limited paying capacity; other members of the public pay at subsidized rates. Payment by the Central Government employees is made at rates approved by the Central Government. Payment by the employees of the Bank of Baroda, the Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd., TELCO, SAIL, NTPC, and New India Assurance Co. Ltd. is governed by the specific contracts made with them. The employees of the Sevashrama are not charged anything; their families, though they are treated free, are charged for some other-than-routine medical tests at lower rates. The standard of treatment and the facilities of services are the same for all classes of patients and there is no discrimination between the rich and the poor. In the Indoor Department, well-to-do patients in private wards are required to pay certain higher charges for bed accommodation and treatment.

Tubercular Chest Diseases:

This Clinic was started at Aminabad in a miniature form in 1957 for the control and treatment of tuberculosis. In June 1970, the clinic moved over to the Vivekananda Polyclinic. It has one very senior specialist and two medical officers who are very popular among the patients and draw a large number of patients. The hospital has all diagnostic facilities like pathology laboratory, X-Ray with Mass Miniature Radiography (MMR) for surveillance of contact of tubercular patients with general population, etc. Patients who are diagnosed as tubercular are provided with all available medicines free of charge out of the medicines supplied by the Central Government and purchased by the Sevashrama out of its own funds. In this department 26,377 cases (8,091 TB, 15,165 respiratory, and 3,121 other services) were treated during the year 1996. Recently this clinic has been recognized by the State Government under their TB Control Programme, in which programme all sputum positive patients belonging to the Trans-Gomati area

are given free treatment (under the DOT scheme).

Non-Tubercular Chest Diseases including Cardiac Diseases:

At present this department is also catering to the emergency needs for the Intensive Care of patients (ICU). The Cardiology Wing has one each of Kodygraph—single channel AC/Battery Portable EKG Machine, Bedside Cardiac Monitor, Defibrillator with auto recording (BPL), Venkey Treadmill with electrical operation, manual controls and digital display (Athletic Model).

In this department, EKG including Tread Mill Test was done in 4,057 cases (outdoor 1,976 and indoor 2,081) during the year 1996.

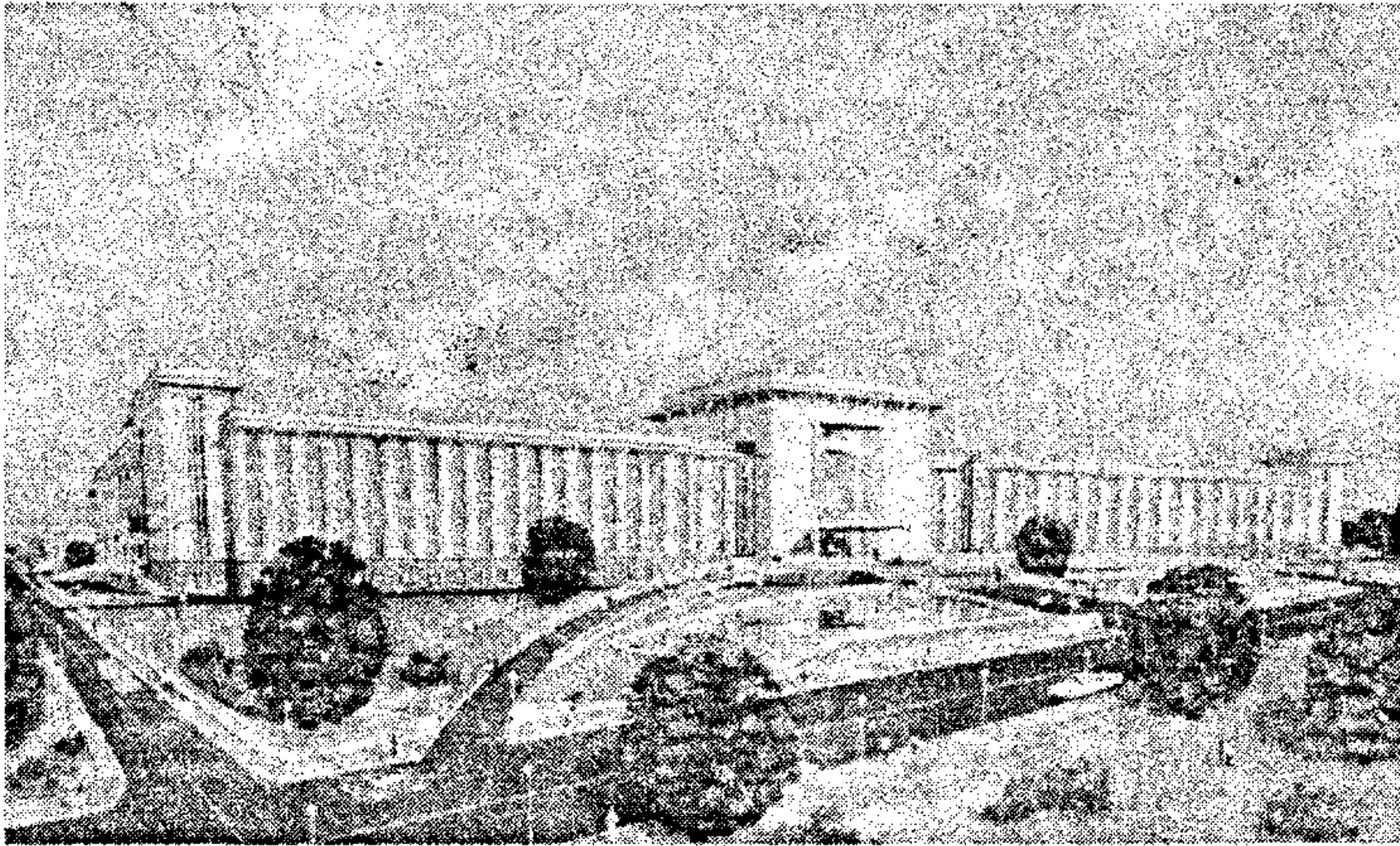
In the near future we plan to include one Multichannel EKG analyser Cardiovit-AT 3 Hindritron Schiller, one 3-bedded central monitor with alarm, one fully automatic computer controlled 3-channel Treadmill Exerciser, one Cardio-Respiratory Resuscitator, one Nebulizing unit and two more units of Bedside Cardiac Monitor and Truscope.

General Medicines including Gastro-intestinal Diseases

This department has one very senior and experienced physician and two gastroenterologists one of whom is a very senior specialist with training in USA. They are assisted by 3 to 4 medical officers and junior staff.

On the General Medical side 24,770 cases and on the Gastroenterological side 14,304 cases were treated in the outdoor department, and 1,578 cases were admitted to the indoor department during the year 1996.

The Rigid-sigmoidoscopy is being done in the Polyclinic with success and satisfaction. The instrument for Upper G.I. Endoscopy has been purchased and will be commissioned shortly. We also plan to start the following therapeutic procedures using



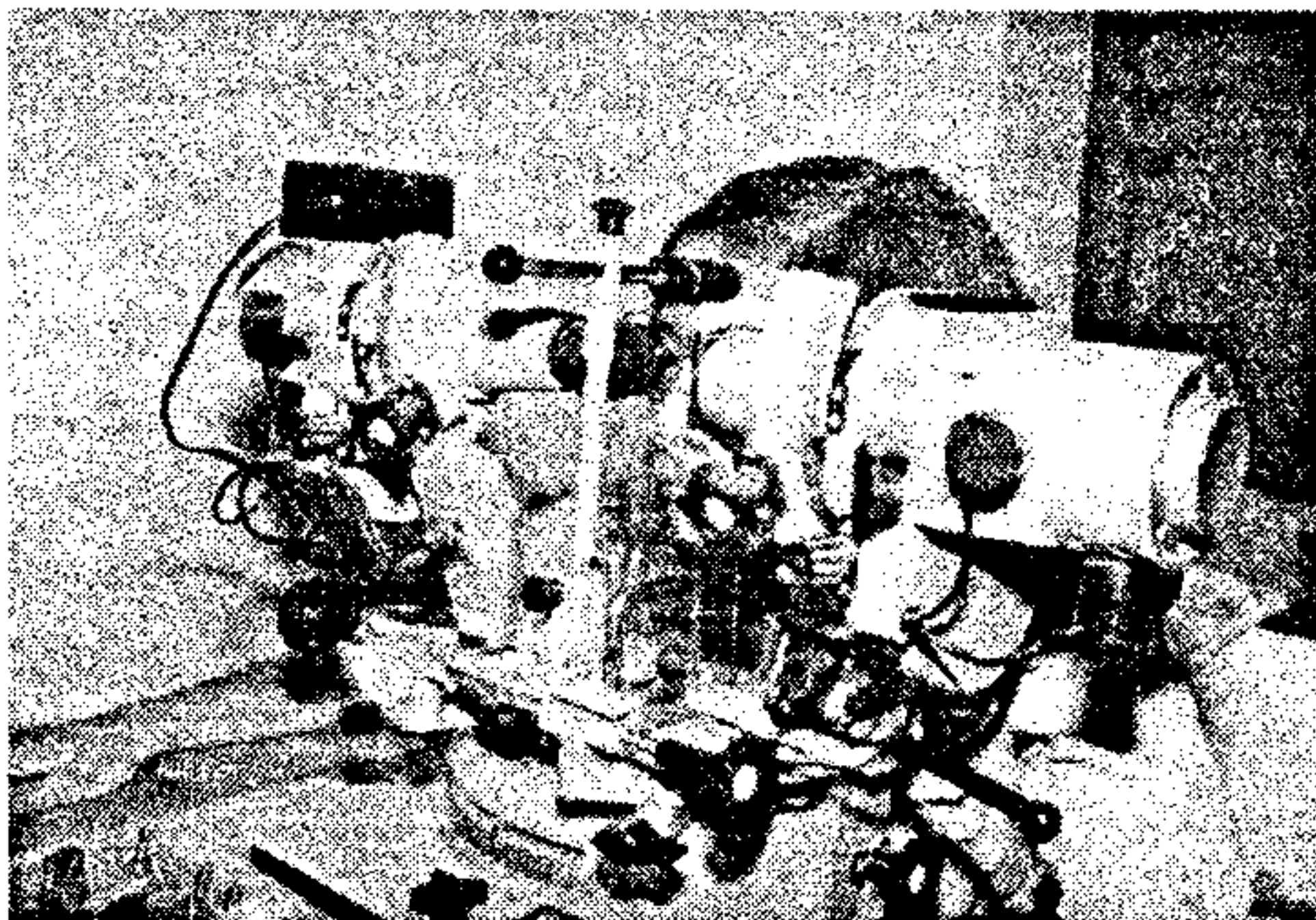
The Vivekananda Polyclinic—An Artist's Imagination



Registration and Billing through the Computer



Medical Records accessed in the Record Room



*Synaptophore Exercise in
the Department of Ophthalmology*



Dental Department

UGIE: Sclerotherapy, Band ligation, Oesophageal dilation, Oesophageal stenting, Endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (diagnostic as well as therapeutic) and Colonoscopy (diagnostic and therapeutic).

Skin Diseases including Leprosy

In the **Dermatology and Leprosy** sections 6,199 and 359 cases respectively were treated in the outdoor department during the year 1996. Facilities were provided for investigation and treatment of leprosy detected at an early stage. In so far as infectious cases are concerned, they were referred to the local Leprosy Hospital. Medicines and injections as are available in stock were supplied free of cost.

The patients were given the benefit of pathological tests and biopsy studies. We desire to start Serological tests like anti-nuclear factor for auto immune disorders, Serum copper estimation for vitiligo, Thyroid function test to investigate skin disorder, Wood's Lamp to diagnose hypo-pigmented skin lesions, Electric Cautery machine to manage superfluous hairs, telangiectasia, common warts, etc., and Comedones expresser and dermal curate for cases of acne, molluscum, etc.

Paediatrics

The broad spectrum of paediatric problems are handled in the busy outdoor section of the department. All available vaccines including the Engerix-B (Paediatric) vaccine, the typhoid vaccine, MMR along with the routine OP, TA, BCG, etc. are advised and given free to the patients. Vaccination against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus and measles were administered both in the Polyclinic and in villages. The indoor department also deals with paediatric problems ranging from neurological to Gastrointestinal illness.

In the three **Paediatric** units of the outdoor section a total number of 29,668 cases

were treated and 541 cases were admitted to the indoor department. Special care was given to 849 Neonatal cases. Our hospital also participated in a big way in the Pulse Polio Programme conducted by the Government of India under the aegis of World Health Organization. The total number of children immunized was 902 in the Polyclinic and 273 in villages through the Institution's Rural Health Programme.

The department has acquired distinction by being selected by the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine for two research projects for Masters in Tropical Paediatrics on 'Diagnosis in Tuberculosis in children using Laryngeal swab and Gastric aspirate as criteria for diagnostic purposes' and 'Prevalence and transmission of B-Streptococcal infection from the mother to the neonate leading to neonatal sepsis'.

General Surgery including Laparoscopy

The Department of Surgery has at present four doctors. Patients are attended first in the Surgical OPD which has an attendance of about 50 patients per day. The surgical emergencies are attended to in the Emergency Section with round-the-clock service by specialists.

The Surgical department acquired a Karl Storz Laparoscopy set in July 1996 and Laparoscopy surgery was started in August 1996. All patients with gall stones are routinely offered Laparoscopic Cholecystectomy. Besides this, diagnostic Laparoscopy is done for various indications. Till date 140 such cases have been handled successfully.

In this department the number of major operations was 599 (including 59 cases treated by laparoscopic procedures) and minor operations were 398 during the year 1996. In the outdoor section 21,002 cases were treated including 3,162 services rendered in 1996.

Orthopaedics

Currently this department has two con-

sultant orthopaedic surgeons and two medical officers. Advanced and comprehensive orthopaedic care is being provided with special emphasis on management of complicated fractures using AO techniques, interlocking nails, external fixators including the use of Ring Fixators (Illizarov Technique). Total Joint Replacement, Arthroscopy and advanced spinal surgery is also in the agenda. Efforts are also on to acquire one C-Arm image intensifier in order to provide better management of fractures.

In this department 34,021 cases were treated including 3,404 services rendered in 1996. The number of major operations was 103 and minor operations 79.

Ear, Nose and Throat

On Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, the ENT outpatient department attends to elective operation and some minor surgical procedures such as syringing, suction, foreign body removal and anterior nasal packing. The number of OPD patients varies from 70 to 110 per day. On Mondays and Fridays operations are performed. The following surgeries are done at present:

Ear: Ear lobule repair, foreign body removal, polypectomy, mastoid abscess drainage, suctional cleaning, myringotomy, mastoidectomy, preauricular sinus excision.

Nose: Foreign body removal, nasal polypectomy, submucosal resection (SMR), septoplasty, Caldwell Luc's procedure, septal abscess drainage, antral puncture and lavage, submucosal diathermy, intranasal antrostomy, nasal bone correction.

Throat: Foreign body removal, biopsy oropharyngeal malignancy, adenoid curettage, tonsillectomy, tracheostomy; and in the larynx, biopsy of laryngeal carcinoma, and direct laryngoscopy.

Neck: Cervical lymph node biopsy, submandibular gland excision, and congenital cyst excision.

In the department 14,563 cases were treated including 592 services rendered with 84 major and 83 minor operations performed in 1996.

There are plans to start a minor OT in the OPD itself, to replace the audiometer, and to perform endoscopic surgery, functional endoscopic sinus surgery, micro laryngeal surgery and micro surgery (ear) -reconstructive ear surgery.

Dentistry including Prosthesis

This department has a three-chair dental unit with two doctors and one dental hygienist. A Cavitron scaler is being used for oral hygiene and an Aerator (Air Turbine) is used for conservative treatment, filling, etc. We have plans to add a Light Cure Unit for Amt tooth filling and other purposes. In the Dental department, total number of cases treated in 1996 was 15,912 including 6,021 services.

Ophthalmology

This department was established in the Ramakrishna Mission Hospital in March 1967 and later included in the Vivekananda Polyclinic. Refraction, Perimetry, Tonometry slit lamp examination, Orthoptic exercises, Preoptic exercises and all minor operations are performed in Eye OPD. In the indoor, all major and minor operations are performed. There are plans to start Intraocular Lens Implantation from September 1997. From time to time research papers were published in the Vivekananda Polyclinic Journals. In this department 298 major operations and 39 minor operations were done in 1996. The total number of patients treated in 1996 was 32,758 including 9,312 services rendered in the outdoor department. The Synoptophore (purchased from the Institution's funds) and the Slit Lamp (purchased out of Central Government Grant) performed well.

Gynaecology

This department with one Family Planning Unit has three consultants, three senior medical officers, one GDMO. On an average about 100 patients attend outdoor daily and there are about 30 in-patients. All obstetric and gynaecological procedures including major gynaecological surgeries are performed in this department. Efforts are being made to procure a laparoscope to start laparoscopic surgeries. Routine Obstetric and Gynaecological Ultrasonography is also done. Transvaginal Ultrasonography, the most recent procedure, has also been started. A separate Obstetrics, OT, MTP (suction evacuator) facility in the labour room, another USG machine, Air Conditioned private rooms, and rotational training to doctors in the field of infertility and laparoscopic surgery are on the agenda.

In the Gynaecology department the total cases treated in the outdoor in 1996 were 23,193 including 1,333 Gynaecology services. The total number of major operations in 1996 was 439 and minor 278.

Maternity

In the Maternity section the number of cases in the outdoor was 4,361 in 1996 and in the indoor 845.

Family Planning

In Family Planning, 879 cases were attended to in the outdoor in 1996. The total number of cases in the indoor department was 86 for Tubectomy, 43 for MTP, and 1 for Vasectomy in 1996.

Anaesthesia

This department is run by three consultant anaesthetists, one technician, and one ward boy. The services are provided in the operation theatre, round-the-clock emergency services and recovery room surveillance. The Eye department has its own OT for operations under local anaesthesia. Only small children needing general anaes-

thesia are operated in the main OT. In the OT the total number of General, Local and Spinal anaesthesia was 2,081 in 1996. In spite of manpower and resource crunch, the department strives its best to provide most modern services incorporating various monitors, ventilators and currently available anaesthetic agents and equipment.

The department also contributes towards the academic activities—both of the hospital in general and anaesthesiology in particular. The members of the staff serve as examiners for various post-graduate degree and diploma examinations. Members of staff also regularly present papers in Continuing Medical Education, Scientific Meetings in various State or National Level Conferences of Anaesthesiology and allied specialties. They have also editorial commitment to various journals of National and International repute. This department with the help of other disciplines and para-professional personnel is in the process of streamlining and updating emergency and resuscitation services.

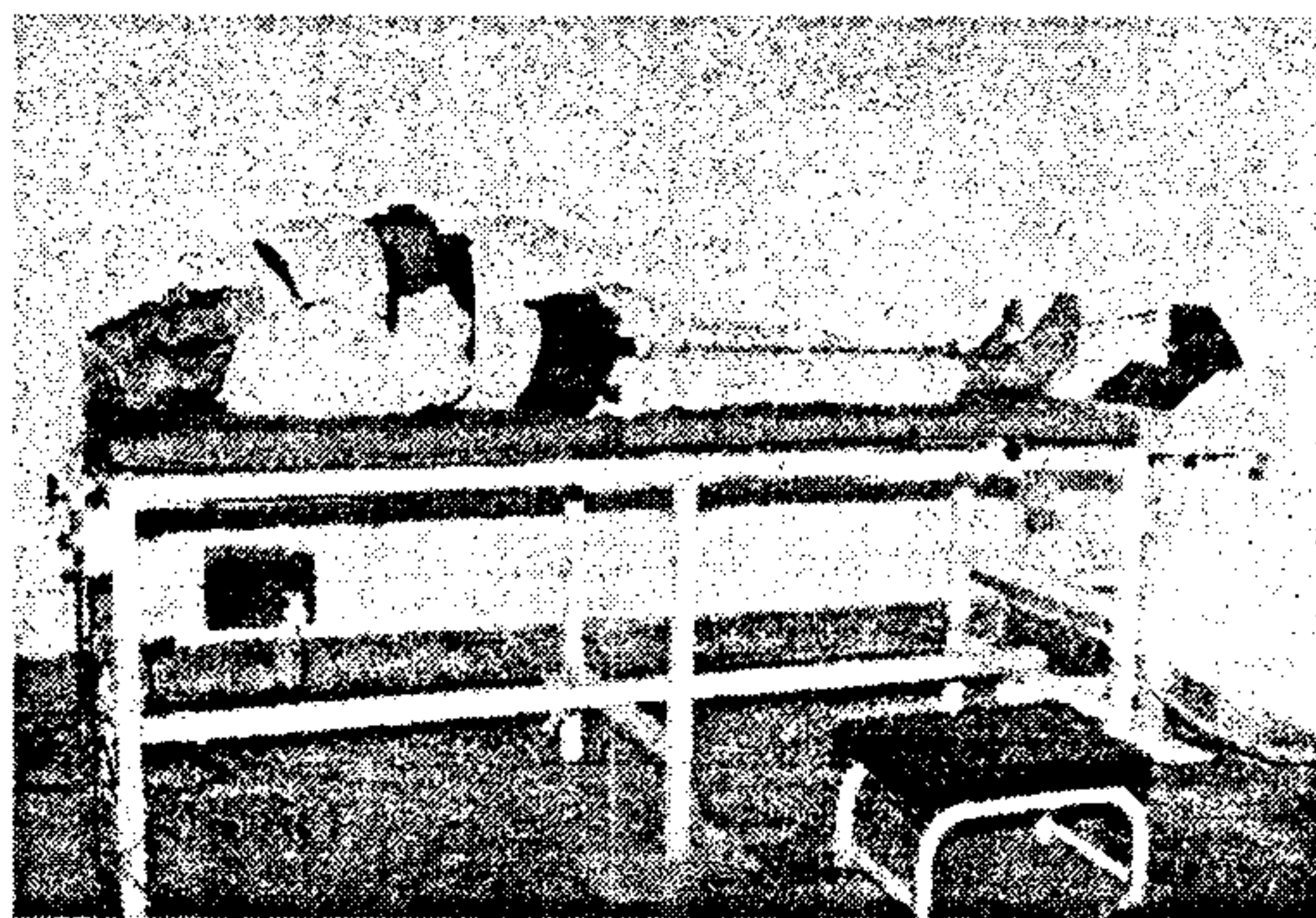
Operation Theatre

A total of 2,400 operations were done in 1996. One Sigmoid pulse oximeter with adult probe and a ECG monitor were added in 1996 to the OT. The department has one OT Master, six staff nurses, three technicians, one assistant technician and other allied staff. Newer techniques like Laparoscopic Cholecystectomy and Trans Urethral Resection and other Optical Urological intervention are regularly undertaken. It is envisaged that gamo nailing and inter-locking pinning will soon be done on regular basis. Intra-ocular lens implants (IOL) will also be started soon. Many newer operative procedures in ENT and Obstetrics and Gynaecology are also in the scheme.

The operation theatre is also involved in autoclaving and sterilization. It supplies sterilized linen and instruments to the entire hospital through its Central Sterilization



Ear Examination: E.N.T. Department



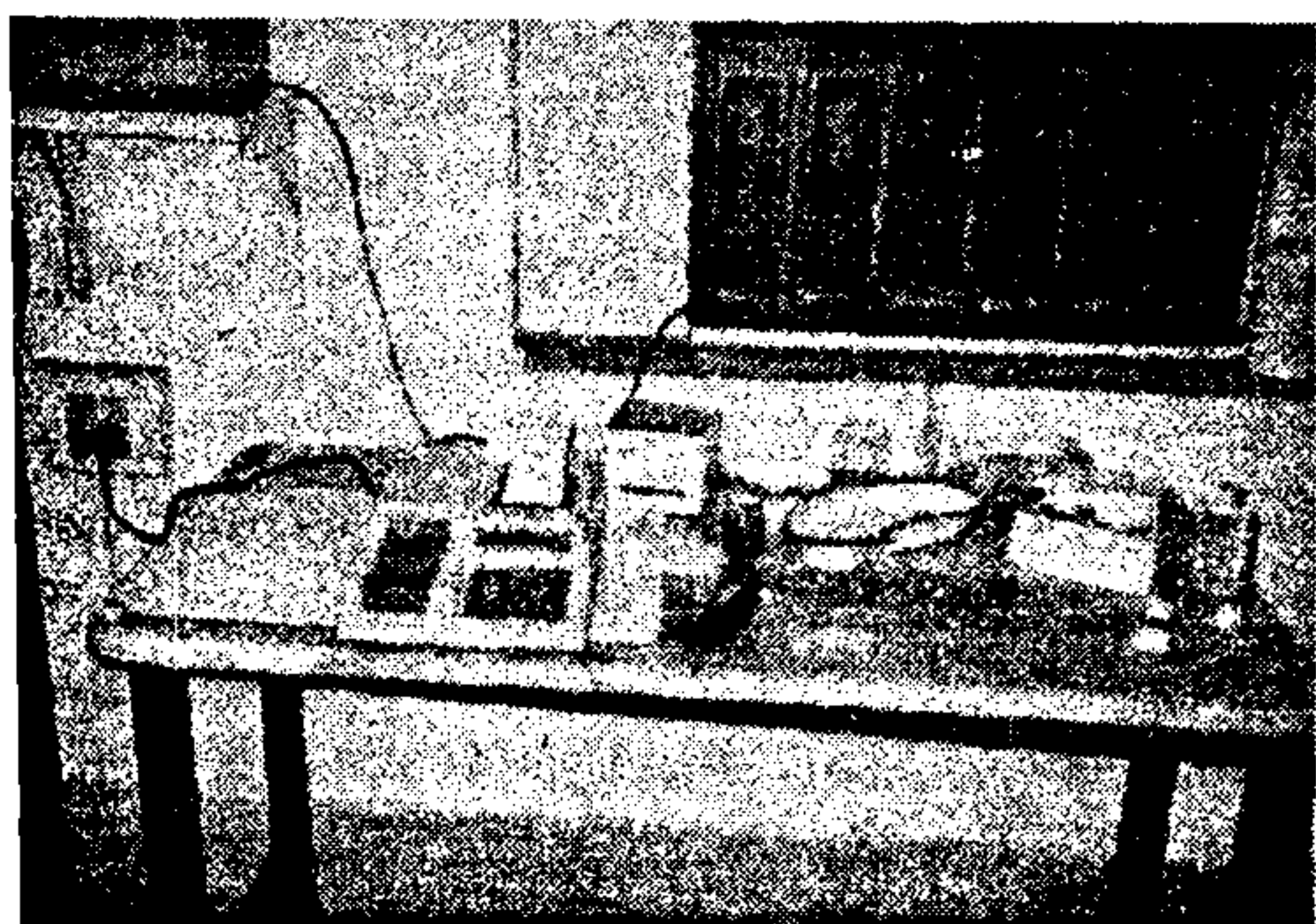
Traction: Physiotherapy Department



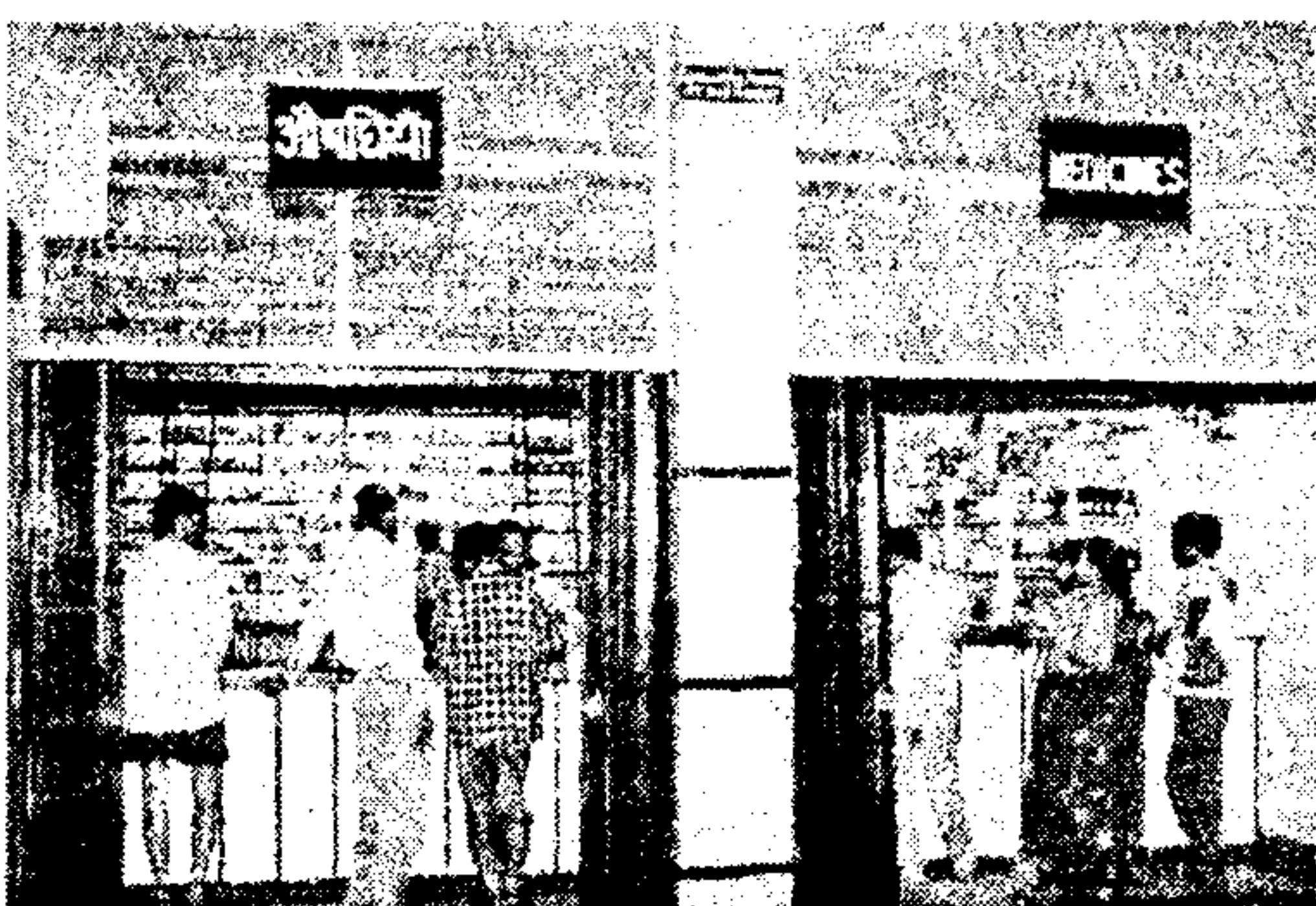
Radiology Department



Eye Surgery: Operation Theatre



Elisa Reader



Pharmacy inside the Polyclinic

Supply Department.

Blood Bank

The Institute has a well laid out air conditioned Blood Bank licensed under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940. 454 bottles of blood were issued for the Polyclinic in 1996. A total restructuring of the Blood Transfusion Unit was done as per Government of India's requirements. The Unit has an Elisa Reader on which is done HIV, HBsAg, hepatitis C virus antigen (HCV). Studies on blood group, VDRL, Malarial parasite and Haemoglobin are also made in this department.

Radiology and Ultrasonography

The Radiology Department is well equipped as per the requirement of Siemens Ltd. and has the following X-ray machines: (1) Tridoros 5s/Kunograph, (2) Tridoros T 6R Universal Plavograph 1000 watt X-ray set, (3) Cidelca 100 mm (MMR X-ray machine), (4) Polyskop Pleodor 3 E fitted to Odelca, (5) Pleomobile 50 mA X-ray set, and (6) Gigantose and Garantix X-ray Generators. The total number of investigations done including Ultrasonography was 21,277 (18,405 outdoor and 2,872 indoor) in 1996. There is a proposal for the purchase of one mobile X-ray unit to facilitate patients in the OT especially for orthopaedic cases.

An Ultrasonography instrument Imager-2380 was installed in the Radiology department on 18 November 1985. This unit was transferred to the department of Gynaecology during the year 1996 and another ultrasound unit Sonoline-2000 was installed on 7 December 1995 in the Radiology department.

Pathology including Biochemistry

With a total staff of 14 technicians, two biochemists and a pathologist this department deals with Haematology, Histopathology, Microbiology, Blood Bank, and Clinical Biochemistry.

Under Haematology the tests performed are: Complete haemogram, platelet count, reticulocyte count, prothrombin time, absolute eosinophil count, sickle cell test, osmotic fragility test, alkaline denaturation test and general blood picture.

Under Histopathology 1,200 biopsy specimens were evaluated and 415 cytology studies made on indoor and outdoor patients and on patients from peripheral hospitals.

Under Microbiology about 15,600 samples are examined every year for routine and microscopic studies of urine and stool, urinary urobilinogen, bile salts, bile pigments, Gram's stain, Ziehl-Neelsen stain for AFB, culture and sensitivity for bacterial growth, AFB and fungal culture. Other tests include C-reactive protein, ASO, Widal test and pregnancy test.

Under Biochemistry the tests conducted are: Blood sugar, Blood Urea, Serum Creatinine, Uric Acid, Lipid Profile, Liver Function Test, Thymol Turbidity, Thymol Flocculation, CPK, Bence-Jones Protein, Chopra's Serum Test and Napier's Aldehyde Reaction, Serum Calcium, Serum Magnesium and Serum Potassium, Serum Chlorides and Serum Bicarbonates. The autoanalyser commissioned in the Pathology Department has shown good performance. Many biochemistry and other hormone assays are now being performed.

The total number of clinical investigations made in the Pathology and Biochemistry departments in 1996 were 1,02,822 (69,266 outdoor and 33,556 indoor).

Two research projects were completed recently: 'Bacteriological diagnosis of Tuberculosis in children' and 'Group B Streptococcal Survey (GBS) in mothers and infants' conducted by Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. In these projects, an evaluation was made of the gastric aspirate, laryngeal swab or sputum for AFB and post-delivery vaginal swabs from mother; and swabs from mouth and external ear of in-

infants for group B streptococcal infection. If found positive in culture, they were confirmed by specific antigen.

The department of pathology works in collaboration with physicians and surgeons. As and when there is a need for a new test, the department gears itself to it. There are plans to perform the thyroid function test and immunoglobulin levels on the Elisa Reader in the future. On account of AIDS, testing kit for AIDS was procured and blood donors are tested for it as a matter of routine. Patients are also tested on request by doctors.

Physiotherapy

This department has one specialist, one senior MO, one physiotherapist, two technical assistants, three helpers and three trainers. It is fairly well equipped with ultrasonic, 5 U. Diathermy, radiant heat, infra red heat, wax bath, muscle stimulators, nerve conduction operator, intra-cervical traction, intra-lumbar traction, exercise cycles, nautical wheel, joint exerciser, whirl pool bath, electric vibrator, horizontal and parallel bars. Two more Ultrasonic Therapy Units and Cervical cum Lumbar Traction Unit were added in 1995-96 to the existing units. The department rendered services to 90,766 (88,426 outdoor and 2,340 indoor) cases in 1996. Modernization of equipment and newer series of exercises will be started in future.

Homoeopathy

Functioning since the Ashrama's beginning at Aminabad, this department is popular among the local population. Some patients from far off places also visit the department for their chronic ailments. Presently it has one senior medical officer (Homoeopathy) and two full-time dispensing personnel. The number of patients treated during 1996 was 1,074 new with 72,649 repeat patient treatment days.

Ayurvedic

Some chronic patients who get no benefit from other systems prefer to be treated by the Ayurvedic system. To cater to their needs we have one full time *vaidya* who also goes to villages for three days in a week in addition to serving at the Polyclinic. There were 651 new patients and 2,549 repeat patient treatment days in 1996.

Emergency Services:

Vivekananda Polyclinic

The Emergency Service Unit functioned in 1996 with 4,847 cases under its care. Out of these 1,411 cases were admitted in the indoor wards for follow up and treatment, while 3,188 cases were discharged after monitoring and 248 cases were referred to KGMC/Balarampur Hospital/SGPGI for further treatment. The Intensive Coronary Care Unit of the Emergency Department monitored 213 cases out of which 74 cases were discharged after monitoring and therapeutic care in the Emergency Service Unit itself. 120 cases were transferred to the indoor wards for further care and follow up treatment and 19 cases were referred to KGMC.

Tread Mill and Ergometer procured from Central Government Grants are being widely used for early detection of actual or potential heart disease cases and to provide advice and timely help to them. The following equipment were put to effective use: (1) Three Channel ECG Unit, (2) Bedside Monitor, (3) Biomonitor, and (4) Portable X-ray Unit, donated by M/s Siemens Ltd. (Germany).

Social Welfare, Patient Guide and Medical Record Sections

The Polyclinic has a band of well-trained young social workers who try to ameliorate the sufferings of patients by providing timely guidance and solace to them. The Medical Record Section provides the records of patients to doctors promptly and

keeps the latest records methodically for easy retrieval.

Computer Section

The computerization of the Hospital's activities was done on 7 March 1991. Initially a mini computer with six terminals was commissioned. Five more terminals and three PCs were added later during various stages of development.

Registration and billing of all patients of OPD and IPD, and bed management (admission, discharge and transfer) are being done through the computer. Statistics and revenue reports, payrolls, statistics for annual report, provident fund of employees, mailing list and list of frequently needed telephones have been computerized. Accounts upto the preparation of monthly trial balance is being done on the computer. Printing works relating to the annual reports, medical bulletin (discussed later) and other works are done using the computer. We have acquired a Pentium and two printers this year and replaced five printers. Some of the other requirements of the Accounts Section and the pharmacy unit have also been computerized.

Welfare to Patients

Welfare expense refers to the cost of free treatment extended to patients on the basis of subsidized rates of charge payable by the patients but not realized from them. When the indoor was started in 1972-73, ten out of 100 beds were earmarked as free beds. Now thirty out of 150 beds are free beds. In actual working the free patients and bed occupancy stood at 29 per cent and 21 per cent respectively in 1996.

Treatment of CGHS and Other Patients

The Polyclinic has been recognized by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, as a Hospital for treatment of Central Government Employees and members of their family. It has also been

recognized for treatment of patients under the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS). Many other bodies and Government undertakings send their employees for treatment and reimburse their expenses according to their own rules. The Bank of Baroda, Lucknow, entered into an arrangement with the Polyclinic for the treatment of their employees and also reserved a certain number of beds. Similarly, the Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd., Jagdishpur, TELCO, SAIL, New India assurance Company Ltd. and NTPC also entered into agreement with the Polyclinic.

Training of House Officers

With effect from November 1984 the Medical Council of India has accorded recognition to the Polyclinic for training of House Officers from colleges and universities at the Polyclinic for appearing in various examinations.

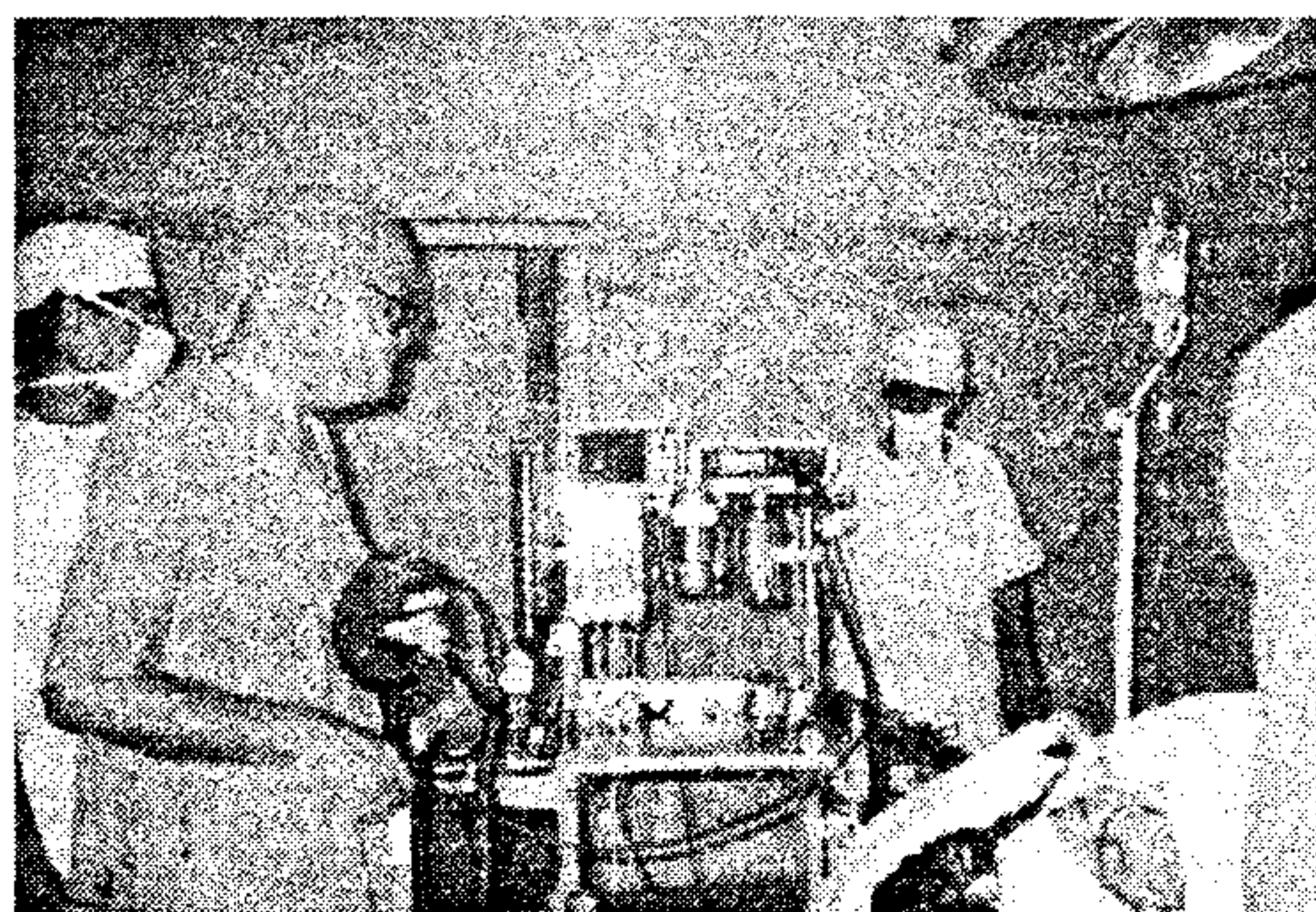
Rural Health Programme

The village uplift work has been the dream of many visionaries in India. Vivekananda Polyclinic, in addition to its responsibility of making the hospital modern, covered the rural population in addressing the problem of health of the whole demographic area. Under this programme, free medical service is rendered to those suffering people residing in rural areas around Lucknow. This programme was taken up in a humble way in Village Amarsanda, 20 km. away on the Kursi Road, Lucknow. Due to administrative and financial difficulties the programme had its ups and downs.

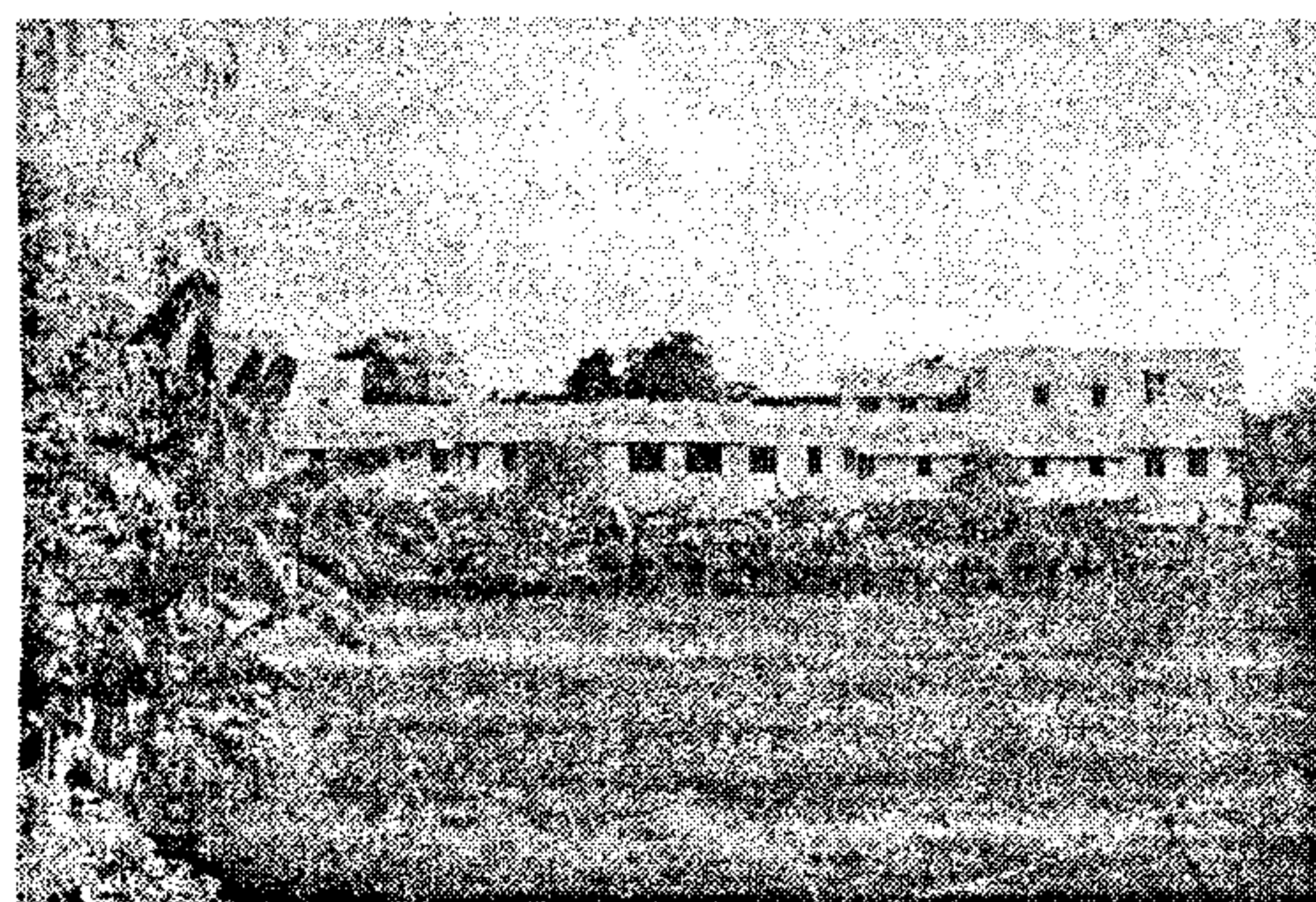
The devoted couple Smt. Madhu Gupta and Sri Ananda Gupta donated a new DCM Toyota Van for the purpose of a Mobile Dispensary and Rs. 10,000 per month for the activity itself. Thus the programme restarted from the auspicious day of Buddha Purnima (20 May 1989). With the increase in the number of patients served, the Guptas raised the monthly donation to Rs. 20,000 per month from November 1989. Medical



Surgical Ward



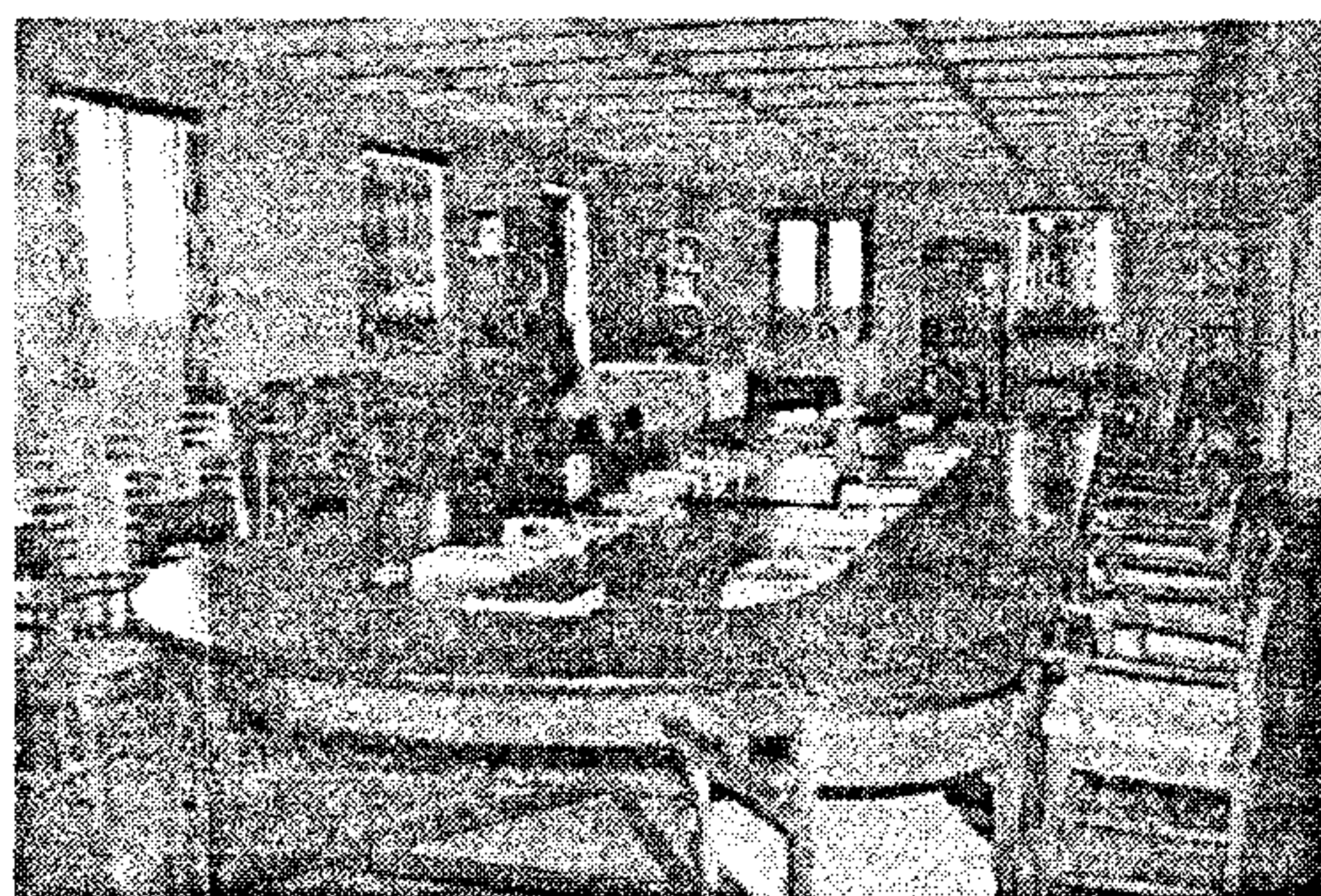
Boyles Apparatus and Laparoscopic Cholecystectomy Operation in Progress



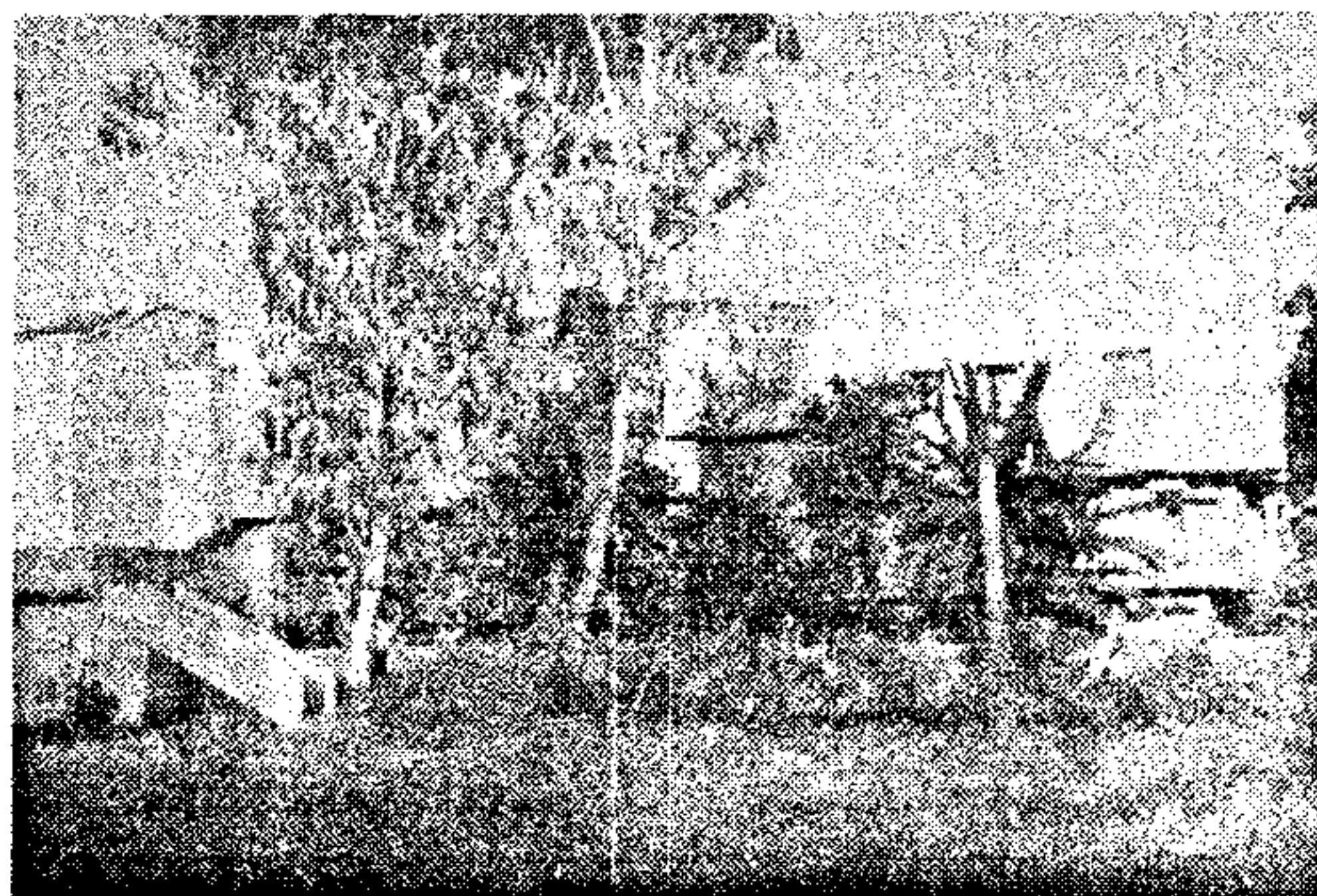
*Vivekananda Polyclinic School of Nursing—
A View*



*Vivekananda Polyclinic School of Nursing—
Class in Progress*



Medical Library



Banking Facility

expenses on the purchase of allopathic drugs for RHP amounted to Rs. 2,41,588 during 1996-97.

The RHP medical team consists of two doctors (one of them is a senior medical officer), two social workers, one nursing assistant, one dispenser, one assistant, one *ayah*, one ward boy and one driver. The working hours are the same as for other staff of the Polyclinic.

Besides visiting the villages thrice a week and attending to the general patients of Heerpur (Atariya, Dist. Sitapur) and Ram Van Kutir (Dist. Barabanki), the following programmes were also undertaken: (1) Immunization programme with effect from October 1989, (2) DPT (Triple Antigen), (3) Oral Polio vaccination to infants and children, and (4) Tetanus Toxoid to pregnant women. During the Pulse Polio Programme 273 children were immunized. Special emphasis is given on family welfare and family planning for rural people who attend camps held under this programme.

Educational Activities of the Polyclinic

The educational activities of the Polyclinic are confined mainly to the maintenance of a Medical Library for medical personnel, running of the Vivekananda Polyclinic School of Nursing, and helping poor and meritorious students in their studies by giving them small stipends as feasible with the limited resources of the Sevashrama.

Medical Library

Located on the top floor of the Polyclinic building, the Vivekananda Polyclinic Medical Library was initially conceived as a book bank for the doctors and other members of the staff of the Polyclinic. The nucleus, established in 1977 with 609 books and 8 periodicals, has since grown into a full-fledged library with 2,516 books (issued 2,196) and 9 journals. Various disciplines of Medicine and Surgery are covered and in addition there are books on Law, Account-

ancy and Computers. Books and periodicals are issued to individuals as well as to various departments for reference usage.

Apart from regular library services, clinical meetings, seminars and annual conferences were held in the library with guest speakers invited from various institutions.

Vivekananda Polyclinic School of Nursing

The need to start a General Nurses' Diploma Training Centre to provide adequate inflow of trained nurses for improving the nursing services provided by the Polyclinic was felt for a long time. The framework of training was worked out and the State Government was approached for according sanction to the Vivekananda Polyclinic School of Nursing, on receipt of which the Training Centre started functioning from 1 September 1987. The School offers the course with contents as laid down by the Indian Nursing Council and adopted by the U.P. State Nursing Council. The three and a half year course after the Intermediate consisted initially of training for three years in General Nursing and six months for training in Midwifery. From September 1994 the course has been revised by the Indian Nursing Council to an integrated course of General Nursing and Midwifery training for three years. After successful completion of the course, diploma in General Nursing and Midwifery is awarded by the U.P. State Nursing Council. The training is given absolutely free. Besides free board and lodging (including free bed), free dress, free recreational facilities like TV and Table Tennis, the student nurses are paid Rs. 50 per month as pocket money. To check abuse of the uniform, the student nurses are now required to get their own dress. After the completion of the training, the new staff nurses are required to serve the Polyclinic for three years on prescribed pay and allowances. Various donors have come forward with handsome prizes and incentives to encourage better academic performance and good conduct of

student nurses.

The Vivekananda Polyclinic School of Nursing is making steady progress and achieving its goal of bringing out dedicated nurses. Fifty-six students of the School have completed their course of training, of which 34 have completed their term of bond for three years and have left the institution, 5 have completed their period of bond and are still attached to the institution, and 17 are serving the Polyclinic under the bond. Thirty-nine students are under training.

Medical Bulletin

The Medical Bulletin meets the requirement of an academic literature for the staff. The first issue of the bulletin was released on 15 July 1988 by the then Minister for Irrigation, Sri Lokpati Tripathi. The second issue was released on 20 November 1988 by Srimat Swami Gambhiranandaji Maharaj, the eleventh President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. Initially a quarterly publication, the bulletin later became an annual feature. Ten volumes consisting of 24 issues have been published as in August 1996.

Religious and Cultural Activities:

Ramakrishna Math, Lucknow

In the early eighties permission for a Math Centre was sought from the Headquarters at Belur to diversify the religious and cultural activities. The Ramakrishna Math was established and in February 1985 the foundations for a new temple to be dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna, a shrine, monks' quarters, kitchen, office and dairy were laid. By 1987 the Ashrama was shifted to the new premises.

The activities of the Ramakrishna Math include: (1) daily worship of Sri Ramakrishna in the morning and aratrik in the evening, (2) worship of Durga and other deities, (3) Ramnam and Shyamnam sankirtans four or five times a month, (4) observance of the birthday tithi of Sri Rama-

krishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda and the direct monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, (5) birth-tithis of all prominent incarnations, and (6) weekly discourses on scriptures for devotees. A new temple to be dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna is under construction. The General Library and Reading Room, closed temporarily, will be restarted when the construction of the new library building is complete. A book sales section houses Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and Vedanta literature. The Math also arranges meetings and interaction with young people. □

Unaware

MEERA MUKERJEE

The author is of Lucknow, U.P.

How unaware was I,
Of my mother's incessant love
Till she wrapped me up
In her loving arms.
None dared touch me
Or do any harm.

Due to utter ignorance
How my scared heart throbbed
Seeing the new world around
Till I learnt to synchronize
The tune of love
With the melodious sound.

O Lord! who are Truth itself,
Bless me with awareness
And your infinite graces
Of which I am unaware. □

साधनगीता Gita for Spiritual Practice

साधनप्रकाशिकासहिता
With an Exegesis on Spiritual Practice
(Continued from previous issue)

DR. B.R. PHANI KUMAR

अथ ध्यानयोगः

आत्मसंयमरूपध्यानयोगस्य निरतिशयनिरवधिकनिर्वाणसुखदायिनः लक्षणदिदर्शयिषया श्रीभगवानुवाच—

Yoga of Meditation

Wishing to illustrate the characteristics of the Yoga of meditation, which is of the nature of self-control, and which bestows unsurpassed, limitless Bliss of Liberation, the Blessed Lord said—

२७. स्पर्शान् कृत्वा बहिर्बाह्यांश्चक्षुश्चैवान्तरे भ्रुवोः।
प्राणापानौ समौ कृत्वा नासाभ्यन्तरचारिणौ॥ (५.२७)
२८. यतेन्द्रियमनोबुद्धिर्मुनिर्मोक्षपरायणः।
विगतेच्छाभयक्रोधो यः सदा मुक्त एव सः॥ (५.२८)

27, 28. Driving out the external objects, fixing the gaze between the eye-brows, regulating the out-going and incoming breaths moving through the nostrils, with the senses, mind and intellect restrained, the reticent ascetic, having Liberation as the Supreme Goal and free from desire, fear and anger is, verily, ever liberated.

स्पर्शान् शब्दस्पर्शरूपरसगन्धान् कृत्वा बहिः बाह्यान् बाह्यविषयानेव सतः मनस्संयोगवियोगेन निरुध्य चक्षुश्चैव दृष्टिमपि अन्तरे भ्रुवोः भ्रूमध्ये कृत्वेत्यनुषज्यते निमीलनेन दृष्टिमविचालयन् प्राणापानौ नासाभ्यन्तरचारिणौ सुखासनासीनः साधकः सततपरमेश्वरध्यानाभ्यासेन समौ कृत्वा यतेन्द्रियमनोबुद्धिः इन्द्रियमनोबुद्धयः पूर्वोक्तनिरन्तरध्यानाभ्यासेन यताः संयताः निगृहीताः यस्य सः यतेन्द्रियमनोबुद्धिः। मुनिः परमेश्वरस्वरूपस्य मननान्मुनिः। मोक्षपरायणः मोक्षः आत्मस्वरूपसाक्षात्कारः परमयनं यस्य स मोक्षपरायणः। विगतेच्छाभयक्रोधः विगताः इच्छा सर्वविषयाकाङ्क्षा भयं प्राप्तवियोगाद्वीतिः क्रोधश्च यस्माद् योगिनः स विगतेच्छाभयक्रोधः। य एवंभूतः स सदा मुक्त एव। न तेन मोक्षप्राप्तये पुनरन्यः प्रयत्नः कर्तव्यः इत्यर्थः।

Driving out the external objects like sound, touch, form, taste and smell, that is, controlling them by separating the mind from association (with them), keeping the gaze between the eye-brows, that is, fixing the gaze by closing the eyes, the aspirant, who sitting in an easy posture, regulating the two breaths (in-going and out-going) moving through the nostrils by constant practice of meditation on the Supreme Lord, has his senses, mind and intellect controlled, is a sage because he reflects on the Nature of the Supreme Lord, has Liberation, direct perception of the Nature of the Self as the Supreme Goal, and who is free from desire for any object, fear of separation from the object gained, and anger is, verily, liberated. The meaning is that he need not put in any other effort again for Liberation. (5.27, 28)

इदानीं योगिनो लक्षणानि निर्ब्रवीति—

Now the Lord defines the characteristics of a yogi—

२९. ज्ञानविज्ञानतृप्तात्मा कूटस्थो विजितेन्द्रियः।
युक्त इत्युच्यते योगी समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः॥ (६.८)

29. *The yogi whose self is contented with Knowledge and Realization, who is immovable, who has conquered his senses and who is alike to a lump of earth, a stone and gold, is said to be steadfast.*

ज्ञानं शास्त्रपरिज्ञानं विज्ञानं तदनुभवः ताभ्यां ज्ञानविज्ञानाभ्यां तृप्तः आत्मा अन्तःकरणं यस्य सः ज्ञानविज्ञानतृप्तात्मा। कूटस्थः परमात्मज्ञाननिष्ठायां सुस्थिरः विजितेन्द्रियः विजितान्तःकरणः यः सः युक्तः संयतः वशी समाधिमान् इत्युच्यते योगी योगारूढः। समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः लोष्टं मृत् अत्यन्तनीचा अश्मा ततः श्रेष्ठः कञ्चन मणिः काञ्चनं ततोऽपि श्रेष्ठं हिरण्यं एतानि अतुल्यान्यपि समानि यस्य योगिनः स समलोष्टाश्मकाञ्चनः।

Knowledge means the knowledge of scriptures and realization is the actual experience of the scriptural dicta. The yogi, established in Yoga with his self, mind contented with the knowledge and experience of the scriptural dicta, who is steady, fixed because of his being established in the Knowledge of the Supreme Self, who has conquered his senses, his inner sense organ, the mind, for whom unequal things like a clod of earth which is worthless, a stone, a precious stone which is more valuable than a clod of earth, and gold, still more valuable, are identical, is said to be steadfast, controlled and concentrated. (6.8)

३०. सुहृन्मित्रार्युदासीनमध्यस्थद्वेष्यबन्धुषु।

साधुष्वपि च पापेषु समबुद्धिर्विशिष्यते॥ (६.९)

30. *He is distinguished, who equally looks upon a well-wisher, a friend, a foe, a neutral and a mediator, a hateful person, a relative and the virtuous and the wicked.*

सुहृत् सद्भावेनोपकारी। मित्रं मैत्रीभावयुक्तः सखा। अरिः शत्रुः। उदासीनः कुत्राप्यसक्तः। मध्यस्थः द्वयोः परस्परविपक्षयोः हिताभिलाषी। द्वेष्यः आत्मनः अपकारी। बन्धुः बान्धवः। एतेषु पुनः साधुषु सज्जनेष्वपि च पापेषु दुर्जनेषु समबुद्धिः अविकृतबुद्धिः पूर्वोक्तान् सर्वानपि समत्वेन पश्यति यः सः विशिष्यते। अयमुत्तमः पुरुषः इति पृथक्क्रियते।

A well-wisher is he who helps with good intentions. He who is endowed with a good will is a friend. A foe is an adversary. He who is disinterested anywhere is a neutral. A mediator wishes welfare for two mutually contrary parties. A hateful person is he who does harm. A relative is a kinsman. He who is same-sighted, that is, is unchanged as to all the above-mentioned, and also towards the virtuous, the pious and the wicked, the sinful—that is, he who looks upon all the above equally, is excellent. He will be classed separately as, 'This is the best person'. (6.9)

तादृशः—

Such a one —

३१. योगी युञ्जीत सततमात्मानं रहसि स्थितः।

एकाकी यतचित्तात्मा निराशीरपरिग्रहः॥ (६.१०)

31. *A yogi living in solitude, controlled in mind and body, desireless, and without any possessions, should always concentrate his mind.*

योगी साधकः युञ्जीत समादधीत सततं निरन्तरं आत्मानमन्तःकरणं रहसि एकान्तप्रदेशे विजने स्थितः एकाकी स्वात्मन्येव स्थापितचित्तः। एकान्ते स्थित्वाऽपि य आत्मनोऽन्यान् बाह्यविषयान् चिन्तयति स एकाकी इति नोच्यते अन्यसंयोगात्। अत एकाकी इति विशेषणम्। यतचित्तात्मा संयतमनोदेहादिसंघातः। निराशीः इहामुत्रफलादिकाङ्क्षारहितः। अपरिग्रहः देहस्थितिमात्रप्रयोजनातिरिक्तस्वीकाररहितः।

A yogi, a spiritual aspirant, living in solitude, in an uninhabited place, alone, having established his mind in his Self alone, should always, uninterruptedly steady, concentrate his mind. He, who, though living in solitude, thinks of external objects, is not said to be 'alone', because he is associated with things other than his Self. Therefore, the adjective 'alone' is used. He is controlled in mind and body, has restrained the complex of body,

mind, etc. 'Desireless' means 'devoid of desire for fruits here or hereafter'. He is without any possessions, does not accept anything other than what is required for the mere sustenance of the body. (6.10)

इदानीं योगसाधकस्य आसनध्यानाहारविहारादिनियमान् विदधाति—

Now the Lord prescribes the rules regarding seat, meditation, food, movements, etc. for the practitioner of the Yoga of meditation —

३२. शुचौ देशे प्रतिष्ठाप्य स्थिरमासनमात्मनः।
नात्युच्छ्रितं नातिनीचं चैलाजिनकुशोत्तरम्॥ (६.११)
३३. तत्रैकाग्रं मनः कृत्वा यतचित्तेन्द्रियक्रियः।
उपविश्यासने युज्याद् योगमात्मविशुद्धये॥ (६.१२)

32, 33. Fixing his seat firm in a clean place, neither too high nor too low, with Kusa grass, deer skin and cloth one over the other, and sitting on that, the yogi, with the activities of his mind and senses controlled, concentrating his mind, should practise Yoga for self-purification.

शुचौ देशे शुभ्रप्रदेश एव प्रतिष्ठाप्य स्थिरं निश्चलं आसनं आत्मनः नात्युच्छ्रितं न अत्युच्छ्रैःस्थितं नातिनीचं न अतीवनीचैःस्थाने प्रतिष्ठितं किंविशिष्टं चैलाजिनकुशोत्तरं चैलं वस्त्रं अजिनं मृगचर्म कुशाश्च यत्रासने उत्तरे उत्तरोत्तरं स्थापिताः तच्चैलाजिनकुशोत्तरम्। कुशानामुपरि अजिनं तद्योपरि च चैलं स्थाप्यत इत्यर्थः। तत्र आसने उपविश्य स्थिरासने स्थिरस्सन् यतचित्तेन्द्रियक्रियः यताः संयताः निरुद्धाः चित्तस्येन्द्रियाणां च क्रियाः व्यापाराः सङ्कल्पादयः येन स योगी यतचित्तेन्द्रियक्रियः। आत्मन्येव उपसंहृतान्तःकरणः इत्यर्थः। स एवंभूतो योगी आत्मविशुद्धये अन्तःकरणस्य बहुजन्मसंप्राप्तवासनाभिः प्रापितमलस्य मलिनापनयनाय योगं सर्वचित्तवृत्तिनिरोधरूपं युज्यात्।

The yogi having fixed, steadily and firmly, in a clean place neither too high nor too low, his seat which has a cloth, deer skin and kuśa grass placed one above the other in a reverse order, that is, deer skin is placed over the kuśa grass and over that is placed a cloth, and sitting on that firm seat, having controlled, restrained the activities of his mind and senses like wish, etc.; that is, with his mind completely absorbed in the Self, such a yogi should practise Yoga which is of the nature of controlling all the modifications of the mind for the purification of the self, for removing the impurities of the mind which has been made to gather these impurities by impressions acquired through innumerable births. (6.11, 12)

तत्र स्थिरासने—

On that firm seat—

३४. समं कायशिरोग्रीवं धारयन्नचलं स्थिरः।
संप्रेक्ष्य नासिकाग्रं स्वं दिशश्चानवलोकयन्॥ (६.१३)
३५. प्रशान्तात्मा विगतभीर्ब्रह्मचारिव्रते स्थितः।
मनः संयम्य मच्चित्तो युक्त आसीत मत्परः॥ (६.१४)

34, 35. Holding the trunk, head and neck straight and steady, remaining firm, seeing the tip of his nose, without looking in other directions, serene in mind, fearless, firm in the vow of continence, controlling his mind and fixing it on Me, the concentrated one should sit, having Me as the Supreme Goal.

समं कायशिरोग्रीवं कायश्च शिरश्च ग्रीवा च कायशिरोग्रीवं समं अवक्रं धारयन् अचलं चलनरहितं च स्थिरः स्थिरो भूत्वा दिशश्चानवलोकयन् दिशामवलोकनं दर्शनं अकुर्वन् स्वं नासिकाग्रं संप्रेक्ष्य दृष्टिं भ्रूमध्ये विलीनां कृत्वेति यावत्। प्रशान्तात्मा प्रशान्तः उपरतः आत्मा अन्तःकरणं यस्य सः प्रशान्तात्मा। विगतभीः विगता भीः भयं योगपतनमरणादिनिमित्तं यस्मात् सः विगतभीः। ब्रह्मचारिव्रते स्थितः मनः दुर्निग्रहं चञ्चलं संयम्य निरन्तरध्यानाभ्यासेन नियम्य आत्मनि संस्थाप्य मच्चित्तो मयि परमेश्वरे स्थापितचित्तः युक्तो योगी आसीत

मत्परः अहं परो यस्य स मत्परः।

Holding the trunk, head and neck straight, without any bend, without any movement, being firm, without looking in other directions, seeing the tip of his nose, that is, absorbing the gaze between the eyebrows, serene, with the inner sense subdued, fearless, without the fear of falling from Yoga, of death, etc.; established in the vow of continence, controlling, regulating through constant practice of meditation, the mind which is restless and hard to control, that is, establishing it in the Self, the yogi, the concentrated one, with his mind fixed on Me, the Supreme Lord, should sit having Me as the Supreme Goal. (6.13, 14)

एवं योगं सततं युञ्जतः किं भवतीत्युच्यते—

It is being stated as to what happens to one who constantly practises Yoga thus—

३६. युञ्जन्नेवं सदात्मानं योगी नियतमानसः।

शान्तिं निर्वाणपरमां मत्संस्थामधिगच्छति॥ (६.१५)

36. Thus constantly concentrating his mind, the yogi, with his mind controlled, attains peace which culminates in Liberation and which is My Abode.

युञ्जन् समाहितस्सन् एवं उक्तप्रकारेण सदा आत्मानं अन्तःकरणं योगी ध्यायी नियतमानसः सर्ववृत्तिभ्यः नियतं मानसं यस्य स नियतमानसः संयतान्तःकरणः शान्तिं निर्वाणपरमां निर्वाणं अविद्याग्रन्थेः मोक्षः तत् परमं अवसानं यस्याः सा निर्वाणपरमा तां निर्वाणपरमां मत्संस्थां अहं स्थानं यस्याः सा मत्संस्था तां मत्संस्थां अधिगच्छति। मां प्राप्य मुक्तो भवतीत्यर्थः।

The yogi, the meditator, being composed, controlling his self, the inner instrument (mind) in the manner explained, having controlled his mind from all modifications, being of a subdued mind, attains peace culminating in Liberation, which is freedom from the knot of ignorance and which is My Abode. (6.15)

स च—

And that—

३७. नात्यश्नतस्तु योगोऽस्ति न चैकान्तमनश्नतः।

न चातिस्वप्नशीलस्य जाग्रतो नैव चार्जुन॥ (६.१६)

37. Yoga is neither for him who eats much, nor for him who does not eat at all, nor for him who sleeps much, nor for him who keeps awake, O Arjuna!

नात्यश्नतः योगसाधनस्वकर्मानुष्ठानादिप्रयोजनातिरिक्तं अन्नं अश्नतः खादतः योगो नास्ति। एवं न चैकान्तमनश्नतः अत्यन्तमखादतश्च योगो न भवति। अत्यन्तमनश्नन् योगसाधने मनः समाधातुं अशक्तो भवति मनसः अन्नमयत्वात्। सात्त्विकमाहारं मितं अश्नतः एव योगः सिद्ध्यति। एवं न चातिस्वप्नशीलस्य न निद्रालोः योगोऽस्ति जाग्रतो नैव चार्जुन।

Yoga is not for him who eats food which is in excess to that required for the practice of Yoga, performance of one's duties, etc. Similarly, Yoga is not for him who does not eat at all, who totally abstains from eating. By completely fasting, he becomes unfit for concentrating the mind on the practice of Yoga, because mind is made of food. Yoga is possible only for him who eats pure food in a limited quantity. Similarly, O Arjuna! Yoga is not for him who sleeps too much, who is sleepy, nor for him who keeps awake. (6.16)

३८. युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु।

युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा॥ (६.१७)

38. Yoga, which destroys misery, is possible for him who is moderate in food and recreation, in performing actions and in sleep and wakefulness.

युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तौ संयतौ आहारविहारौ यस्य एवं युक्तचेष्टस्य संयतव्यापारस्य कर्मसु तथा

युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य युक्तौ स्वप्नावबोधौ स्वापजाग्रत्कालौ यस्य तस्यैव योगो भवति सिद्ध्यति दुःखहा
अनादिमायापरिकल्पितसर्वसंसारदुःखं हन्ति इति दुःखहा।

For him alone, whose food and recreation are controlled, whose performance of actions is regulated, who is of controlled activity, whose sleep and wakefulness, similarly, are regulated, that is, who has regulated the duration of his sleep and wakefulness, is possible the Yoga which destroys misery, all the misery in transmigratory existence created by beginningless delusion. (6.17)

योगमारुरुक्षुरपि मनस्संकल्पितविषयान् ध्यायति चेत् योगो न सिध्यतीति योगप्राप्तेः सुलभोपायमाह—

Though one is desirous of attaining to Yoga, Yoga is not possible for one if one thinks of the objects desired by mind; therefore, the Lord mentions an easy path to the attainment of Yoga—

३९. सङ्कल्पप्रभवान्कामास्त्यक्त्वा सर्वानशेषतः।

मनसैवेन्द्रियग्रामं विनियम्य समन्ततः॥ (६.२४)

४०. शनैः शनैरुपरमेद्बुद्ध्या धृतिगृहीतया।

आत्मसंस्थं मनः कृत्वा न किञ्चिदपि चिन्तयेत्॥ (६.२५)

39, 40. Renouncing completely all the desires born of volition, controlling the senses from all sides through the mind, one should slowly withdraw oneself through the intellect controlled by firmness. Establishing the mind in the Self, one should not think of anything else.

सङ्कल्पप्रभवान् सङ्कल्पः प्रभवः आदिः मूलं येषां ते सङ्कल्पप्रभवाः। तान् सङ्कल्पप्रभवान् कामान् दुःखोदकान् सर्वानशेषतः मनसा विषयेषु वैराग्यवता विषयसंयोगपर्यवसायिदुःखदोषानुध्यायिना एव इन्द्रियग्रामं इन्द्रियसमूहं विनियम्य निगृह्य समन्ततः सर्वतः। शनैः शनैः अद्वुतप्रयत्नेन उपरमेत् उपरममभ्यसेत् बुद्ध्या धृतिगृहीतया। धैर्येण दृढनिश्चयेन पुनः पुनः ध्याने प्रवेशितया इत्यर्थः। आत्मसंस्थं प्रत्यगात्मनि संस्थापितं दीर्घकालध्यानाभ्यासेन मनः कृत्वा न किञ्चिद् अपि बाह्यं वस्तु चिन्तयेत्।

Renouncing completely all the desires which bring misery and of which volition is the source, origin, root, and controlling, subduing from all sides all the senses, the aggregate of senses, through the mind which is endowed with dispassion for objects and which meditates on the evils of misery which is the result of contact with objects, one should withdraw, practise abstention slowly and not by forceful effort, through the intellect directed by steadfastness, that is, through the intellect which is time and again engaged in meditation by courage and strong resolve. Establishing the mind in the Inner Self through the practice of meditation for a long time, one should not think of anything else, any external object. (6.24, 25)

किं च—

Moreover—

४१. यतो यतो निश्चरति मनश्चञ्चलमस्थिरम्।

ततस्ततो नियम्यैतदात्मन्येव वशं नयेत्॥ (६.२६)

41. Wheresoever the unsteady and inconstant mind wanders, from those objects one should restrain it and bring under the control of the Self alone.

यतो यतो बाह्यविषयान् प्रति बहिः निश्चरति निर्गच्छति योगिनो निग्रहात् मनः स्वभावेन चञ्चलं अस्थिरं ततस्ततः तस्मादेव बाह्यविषयात् वैराग्यबोधनेन आकृष्य नियम्य एतत् मनः आत्मनि हृदयस्थे प्रत्यगात्मन्येव वशं नयेत् प्रापयेत्। परमात्मन्येव स्थापयेदित्यर्थः।

Wheresoever the mind, which is by nature unsteady and inconstant, goes out towards the external objects and slips away from the yogi's control, from that very external object

he should withdraw, restrain that mind by teaching it dispassion and bring it under the control of the Self, the Inner Self which is in the heart. The meaning is, one should establish it in the Supreme Self. (6.26)

तदेव ध्यानयोगलक्षणं ब्रह्मज्ञानोपकारकं पुनः संक्षेपतः प्रतिपादयति—

The Lord again explains briefly the above principle of the Yoga of meditation which is an aid to the Knowledge of Brahman—

४२. बुद्ध्या विशुद्ध्या युक्तो धृत्याऽऽत्मानं नियम्य च।
शब्दादीन्विषयांस्त्यक्त्वा रागद्वेषौ व्युदस्य च॥ (१८.५१)

४३. विविक्तसेवी लघ्वाशी यतवाक्कायमानसः।
ध्यानयोगपरो नित्यं वैराग्यं समुपाश्रितः॥ (१८.५२)

४४. अहंकारं बलं दर्पं कामं क्रोधं परिग्रहम्।
विमुच्य निर्ममः शान्तो ब्रह्मभूयाय कल्पते॥ (१८.५३)

42, 43, 44. *Endowed with pure intellect, controlling the mind through steadfastness, renouncing external objects like sound, banishing attachment and hatred, resorting to solitude, eating a little, being controlled in speech, body and mind, being always absorbed in the Yoga of meditation, practising dispassion, abandoning ego, power, pride, desire, anger and acceptance, free from the idea of 'mine' and serene, one becomes fit for the state of Brahman.*

बुद्ध्या विशुद्ध्या अनवरतध्यानजपस्वाध्यायविवेकवैराग्यादिसाधनैः शुद्धत्वमापादितया युक्तः धृत्या धैर्येण आत्मानं अन्तःकरणं नियम्य निगृह्य च शब्दादीन् विषयान् बाह्यान् योगपरिपन्थिनः त्यक्त्वा रागद्वेषौ रागः इष्टे प्रीतिः द्वेषः अनिष्टे अप्रीतिः तावुभावपि योगप्रतिबन्धहेतू व्युदस्य परित्यज्य च। विविक्तसेवी विविक्तान् जनरहितान् प्रदेशान् एकान्तदेशान् सेवितुं शीलमस्येति विविक्तसेवी। लघ्वाशी लघु अल्पं अन्नं अशितुं शीलमस्येति। किंच यतवाक्कायमानसः यतानि संयतानि वाक्कायमानसानि यस्य स यतवाक्कायमानसः। ध्यानयोगपरः ध्यानाभ्यासतत्परः नित्यं सततं वैराग्यं बाह्यविषयानासक्तिं समुपाश्रितः सम्यगुपाश्रितः वैराग्यनिष्ठ इत्यर्थः। अहंकारं अहंभावं सर्वप्रवृत्तिषु पुरोगामिनं बलं रजस्तमोरूपं दर्पं अहं सर्वोत्कृष्ट इति भावं कामं कर्मफलादिविषयेच्छां क्रोधं इच्छानावाप्तिनिमित्तं परिग्रहं विमुच्य संत्यज्य निर्ममः ममभावरहितः कस्मिन्नपि विषये अनुषङ्गरहितः शान्तः उपरतसर्वसंसारधर्मः ब्रह्मभूयाय ब्रह्मभावाय कल्पते शक्तो भवति।

Endowed with an intellect purified by uninterrupted practice of meditation, japa, study of scriptures, discrimination, dispassion, etc., controlling, restraining the self, mind through steadfastness, courage, renouncing external objects like sound, etc., which are the causes of obstacles to Yoga and banishing, abandoning, attachment which is happiness in the thing wished for, and hatred which is unhappiness in the unwanted thing, resorting to solitude, residing in places which are uninhabited and sequestered, eating a little, a very small quantity of food, and with his speech, body and mind controlled, and always practising absorption in meditation and resorting properly to dispassion for, disinterest in, external objects, that is, established in desirelessness; and abandoning, renouncing ego, the forerunner of all activities; power of the nature of rajas and tamas; pride which is the feeling, 'I am the greatest of all'; desire which has fruit of action for its object; anger caused by unfulfilled desire; and acceptance, devoid of the idea of 'mine', that is, devoid of attachment to anything; serene, having calmed all the tendencies of worldliness, he becomes fit for the state of Brahman. (18.51, 52, 53)

News and Reports

Centenary Celebrations of the Ramakrishna Mission and Swamiji's Return to India

The **Rahara Centre** organized a programme from 23 to 26 January, the highlights of which were: a parliament of religions in which representatives of different religions spoke, distribution of prizes to the winners in different competitions, and distribution of rugs, 100 *saris* and 100 *dhotis* to the poor and needy people of nearby areas. Many distinguished guests, devotees and a large number of local citizens attended the function.

On 27 February, a discourse on *Swami Vivekananda and Ramakrishna Mission in its Centenary* was organized by the **Dhaka Centre** in which Janab Abdus Samad Azad, Foreign Minister, Govt. of Bangladesh, Mr. S.B. Atuguda, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Bangladesh, and Mr. Lok Bahadur Shreshtha, Ambassador of Nepal to Bangladesh took part.

Temple Dedication

At **Madurai Math**, Revered Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, the Senior Vice

President of the Ramakrishna Order, consecrated the newly built Sri Ramakrishna temple on 13 March and presided over a public meeting held in the afternoon and released a souvenir brought out on this occasion. Revered Swami Smanananandaji Maharaj, the General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, addressed the devotees on 12 and 13 March. Thousands of devotees and 95 monastic members from various centres attended the function. The newly constructed Monk's Quarters, kitchen and dining hall were also inaugurated by Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj.

Vivekananda Youth Day

Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, observed Vivekananda Youth Day on 25 and 26 January. Elocution, paragraph writing, music, a question-answer session and demonstration of yogic asanas formed part of the function which was attended by about 180 youths.

E. Mail & Web

The e-mail address of the **Vedanta Society, Chicago**, is chivedanta@aol.com.

Fixing the Mind on God - VIII

(Continued from page 525)

etc. — do with the idea that he is Gopala; take this attitude that God resides in him in the form of Gopala and that it is He whom you are feeding, dressing and serving. Why should you think that you are doing all this for a human being? As is your mood, so will be your gain.' ...she made in

a short time considerable spiritual progress, so much so that she attained even Bhavasamadhi.¹⁴

Thus, what is essential for spiritual progress is a strong yearning coupled with the understanding that the object towards which this yearning is manifest is Divine.

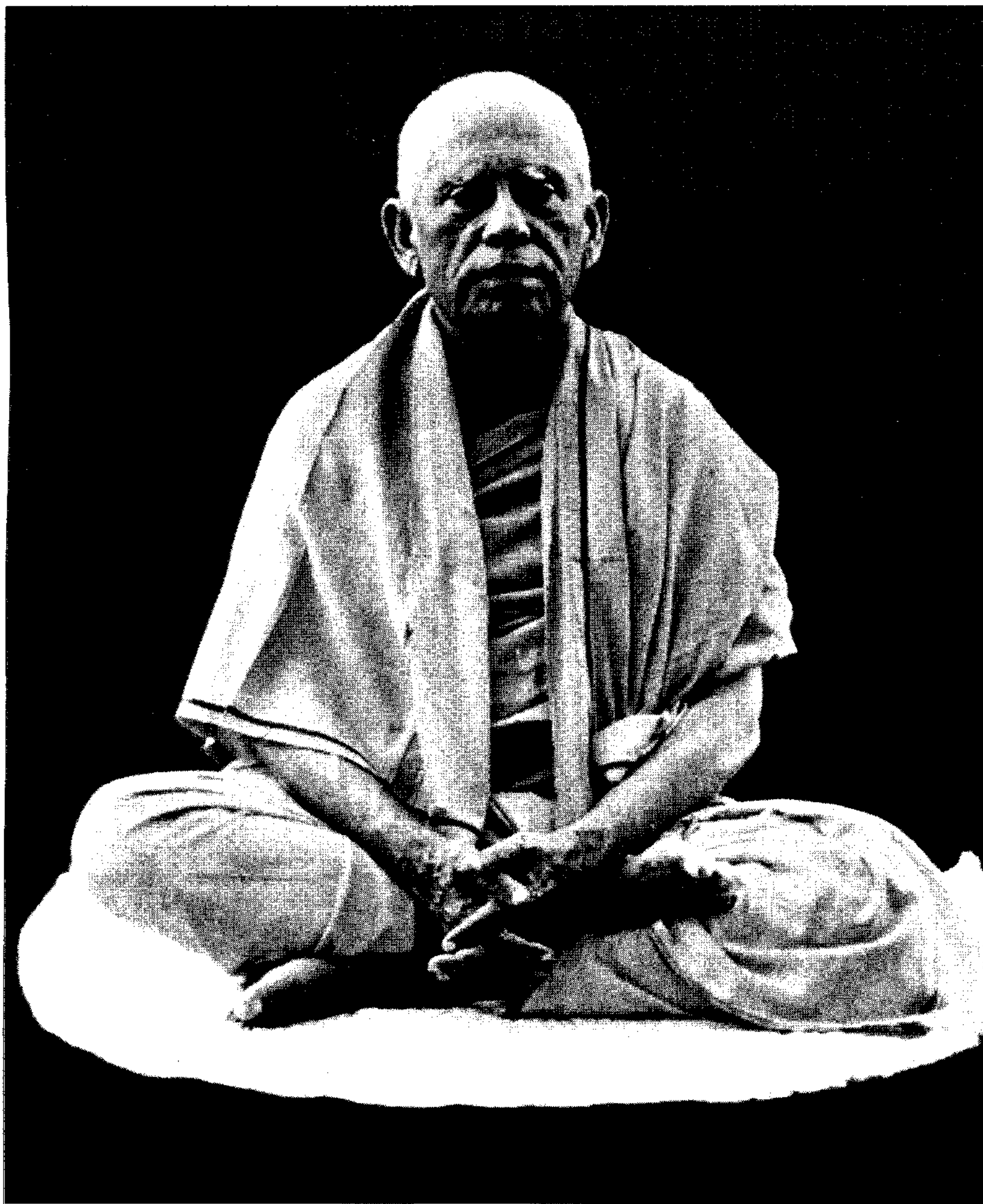
14. *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1970), p. 343.

(to be continued)

Never remain idle, for idleness is the progenitor of all evil thoughts. Be always vigilant in carrying out your duties. Shake off all dullness from within you. Laziness is the worst of all sins. There is no royal road to perfection.

—Swami Ramakrishnananda, *Precepts of Perfection*, p. 73

Mahasamadhi of Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj



With profound sorrow we announce Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj's giving up of his body and entering *Mahasamadhi* on 10th August 1998 at 2.28 p.m. Maharaj was 12th President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission and was approaching ninety-eight.

Most Revered Maharaj, known as Vijay Chandra Roy in his pre-monastic days, was born in 1901 in an interior village of Bengal where he had primary education. Intelligent from his childhood, he graduated from the Government Sanskrit College, Calcutta where he mastered Bengali, English and Sanskrit. His monastic tendencies were apparent from very young age and impelled by an inner urge and a higher calling he had been to Belur Math to become a sannyasin while still at college but was not accepted as he was very young and had not completed his studies. He was asked to come later.

The refusal by Belur Math authorities to accept him as an inmate further stoked the fire of renunciation which was already blazing in his heart. Giving up his residence, he made a Shiva temple on the banks of the Ganga in Bagh-bazar, Calcutta, his dwelling place where he practised austerities and lived a strict life of a brahmacharin. During this period he had an occasion of making pranams to Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and was later present during her funeral in 1920. He formally joined the Ramakrishna Order of Monks in 1923.

Initiated by Swami Saradanandaji Maharaj, he came in contact with most of

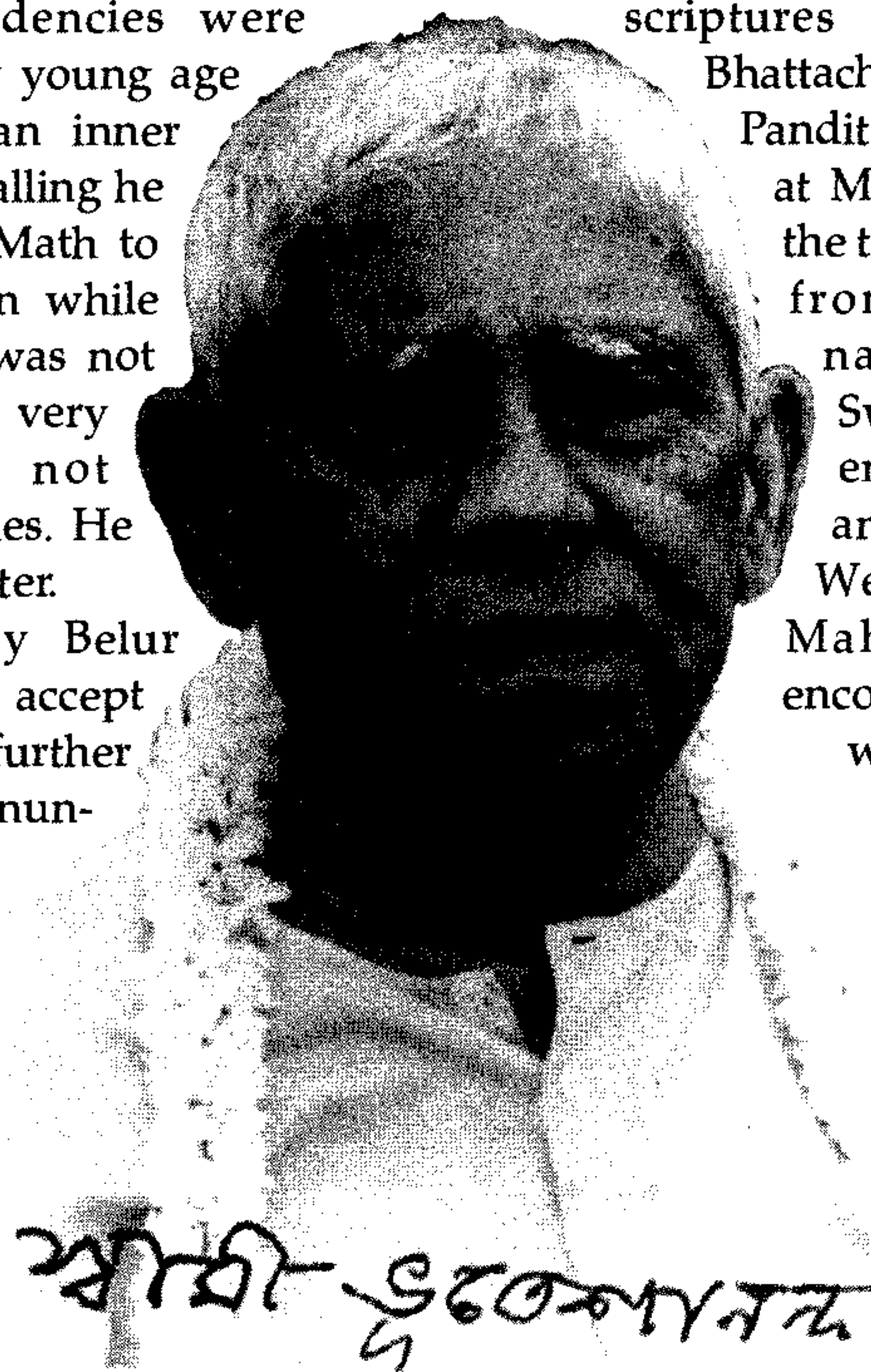
the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna whose close association moulded his spiritual life. In 1928 he was ordained into sannyasa by Swami Shivananda whom he had served for some years. He spent more than three years doing *tapasya* in Uttar Kashi (Himalayas) living on *bhiksha*.

Besides traditionally studying the scriptures from Pandit Tarasar Bhattacharya at Belur Math and Pandit A.D.L. Srinivasacharlu at Mysore he had imbibed the true spirit of the *shastras* from Swami Suddhananda, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda. An erudite scholar in the ancient scriptures and Western Philosophy, Maharaj's scholarship encompassed an extremely wide range of subjects.

Endowed with a prodigious memory, a tremendous power of attention and alertness, a loving heart like a mother's, an extremely ready wit, he easily captivated the heart and mind of

anyone who came in contact with him.

His whole life was one of learning and teaching not merely by precept but by his unique monastic life. Self-discipline and austerity came to him naturally. Leading an inspired life himself, he could infuse inspiration in the most ordinary souls, as a result of which many of the younger generation monks were encouraged towards serious study and austerities.



Swami Bhuteshanandaji's profound learning, untiring energy, dedication and a caring heart made him a perfect vehicle for spreading the living message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. His field of activity had been as diverse as spreading education among the tribal children of Khasi Hills in Eastern India, and being the first secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission in Shillong. When he was appointed the Head of the Ramakrishna Math at Rajkot he learnt Gujarati and then arranged for and edited the translation of *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* and other major books of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature in that language. This work won him warm appreciation. Devotees in Gujarat still remember him as an unassuming, scholarly monk with a colossal spiritual power. On different occasions he worked



in various capacities in the Dhaka, Mysore, and Kankhal centres of the Order.

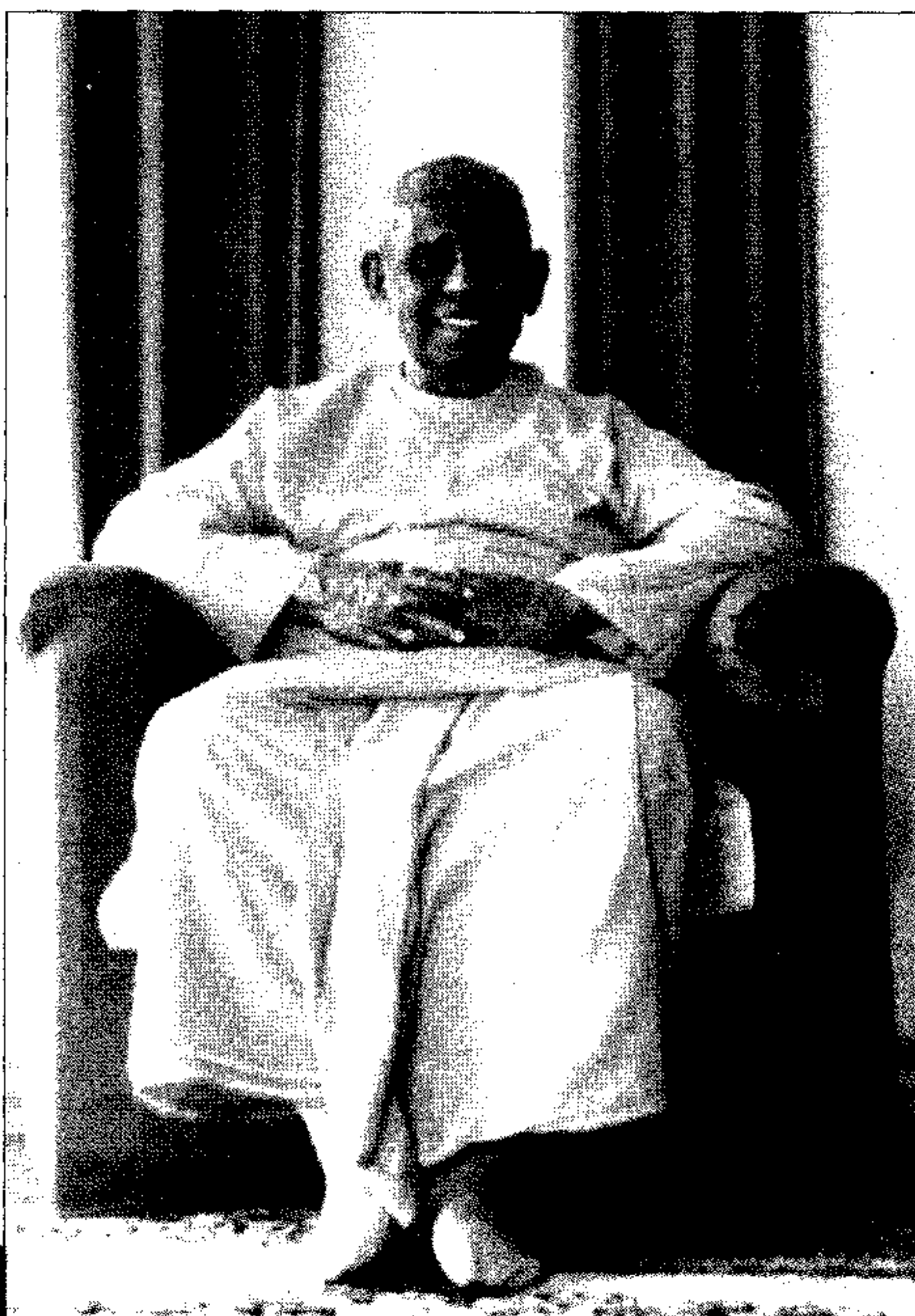
Maharaj was appointed a Trustee of the Ramakrishna Math and member of the Governing Body of Ramakrishna Mission in 1965, and was brought to the headquarters at Belur Math in 1966 as an Assistant Secretary. In 1975 he was elected a Vice-President of the Order and simultaneously the Head of Ramakrishna Yogodyana Math at Kankurgachhi, Calcutta. During his tenure as the Vice-President he travelled widely in India and abroad spreading the message of

Ramakrishna-Vivekananda-Vedanta. As a result of his inspiration and guidance a Vedanta Centre in Japan was affiliated in 1984 under the Ramakrishna Order. In 1989, Maharaj was chosen to become the President of the Order. During his long period of spiritual ministration since 1975 he gave initiation to devotees from all over the world, making them his disciples.

Although living on a high spiritual plane, his all-encompassing loving heart, childlike simplicity and universal compassion endeared him to untold numbers to whom he taught spiritual

truths in simple and understandable language. Both monks and lay devotees hung on every word that he uttered, whether in merry-making or explaining intricacies of the scriptures, and longed to get his blessings in the form of a loving glance or the beautiful smile which rarely left him. Even when critically ill, he loved to see and bless all those who would come to meet him.

He never wrote a book, but used to conduct regular classes on the Upanishads, the Bhagavatam and *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* (Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna) till his health failed. His talks and lectures lacked ornamentation, but enlightened listeners directly. From his lectures and class talks some books have been published, of which *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita Prasanga* (in six



vols.), *Mundakopanishad*, *Kathopanishad*, *Upanishad O Ajker Manush*, *Sharanagati* (all in Bengali) and *Thoughts on Spiritual Life* (in English) are very popular.

His *Mahasamadhi* has left behind a big void and an irreparable loss in the lives of the monks of the Order as well as devotees and admirers whose living refuge he was.

All India Radio broadcast condolence messages sent by the President of India, the Prime Minister of India, the Home Minister, the Minister for Human Resource Development and the Governor of West Bengal. Messages are also pouring in from dignitaries, organizations and persons from different walks of life.

